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THE MODERN DRAMA SERIES
EDITED BY EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

PEER GYNT BY
HENRIK IBSEN

PEER GYNT

A DRAMATIC POEM BY
HENRIK IBSEN

TRANSLATED IN THE ORIGINAL METER
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
R. ELLIS ROBERTS



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	ix
PEER GYNT	1
NOTES	237

PREFACE

FOR years I have cherished the dream that some day I might be permitted to produce a version of "Peer Gynt" by which the wonderful charm and deep philosophy of the original could be brought within the grasp of English-speaking readers. That dream lies probably behind me, for while it would be foolish to claim perfection on behalf of Mr. Roberts' translation — as he would be the last one to enter any such claim — that translation comes nevertheless so close to the original, both in form and thought, that the chance of surpassing it seems small, indeed. The difficulties presented by the original are greater by far than those encountered in any other of Ibsen's plays, and it would be almost unthinkable that a translator could wholly avoid inversions and other artificialities. There are lines in Mr. Roberts' version which have troubled me, but time and again I have also been pleasantly startled by the ingenuity and tact displayed in the face of problems that seemed beyond solution to me. Through his work, one of Ibsen's most interesting and attractive creations has been rendered available to the English-speaking public in such shape that, at last, they may savor the "serious jesting" that gives the original a place apart in the world's literature. Never did Ibsen write with more abandon, never did he more

strikingly prove himself possessed of that graver insight which we call humor, than in "Peer Gynt," where, with chameleontic ease, his symbolism contracts and expands, so that sometimes we find only himself and sometimes all mankind at the core of his mercifully merciless satire. And, furthermore, it is my belief that, as our evolutionary conception of life develops and clarifies, it will become increasingly evident that this latter-day myth, woven so skillfully out of old legends and new facts, is one of the deepest and most instructive books given to mankind since science began to triumph over faith—for in this "dramatic poem" (as Ibsen himself called it), and particularly in its final act, lies foreshadowed the new faith that must sooner or later rise out of that triumph.

E. B.

INTRODUCTION

I

IF *Peer Gynt* stands for anything, it stands for this truth, that personality is more important and splendid than any other factor in life or art. That is, to my mind, the true secret of the ground between Classical and Romantic — though *Peer Gynt* is rather Gothic than Romantic. The old criticism — never better exemplified than in Addison's paper on *Paradise Lost*, or better caricatured than in Berkeley's edition of the same poem — applied rules to a poem: it did not dream of examining the rules by the poem, still less did it think of criticising the poem by its knowledge of the author. For instance, Addison discourses on whether humor is proper to an epic: quotes the comic passage in Homer, looks minutely for similar lapses in Virgil, then rightly condemns the bad joke of the gunpowder in Milton. Now this no modern critic would do. What he would see first of all is that, whatever the suitability of Comus' intrusion into epos, still Homer had a sense of humor, and Milton as evidently had not; and for that reason the author of *Paradise Lost* would have been better advised to refrain from comic incident.

Let me insist, too, that the classical tradition, in creative or critical work, was unknown to the classical age. It was an invention of France. Aristotle had no thought of drawing up rules for the drama, or for

literature generally, apart from the facts; only his facts were fewer and covered less space than do ours, and so his criticism is more rigid. But it is based on masterpieces: the Greek masterpieces, unlike the French, were not written to rule — the rules were merely so many statements of their observed excellence. That is the real reason why some of us who love Sophocles do not think he is more akin to Racine than to Shakespeare; and feel the harmony of the *Tempest* to be far more Hellenic than the passion of *Phèdre*. Shakespeare, as Sophocles, expressed his temperament by the rules that suited him; Corneille and Racine expressed theirs by rules that embodied not their choice but their traditions. They did not find a form that appealed to them. They followed a monarch whom they feared to disobey.

Ibsen had, more than any modern writer, periods when different styles appealed to him. In his youth he is romantic, with side-glances towards satire; towards maturity he becomes classical, as in *The Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. In his greatest achievements he is modernist — that is, his form so clothes his ideas that we cannot conceive such a play as *The Master-Builder* in any other setting: body and soul are inseparable.

About *Peer Gynt* there is none of this inevitability of form. Indeed it is — if we follow the old divisions — far more epic than dramatic. In epos the character of the hero is static. Achilles does not develop, nor Odysseus, nor Satan. In drama the characters grow before us, and of the end of that growth we are uncertain. *Peer Gynt* himself is the same in every scene of the play. He is the man of the nineteenth century

seen against the eternities; and the eternities make him thoroughly uncomfortable. He is Odysseus, with this vivid difference, that he has conscience; he is an Achilles, who never leaves his tent until the last page of his story; he is a Satan who would wheedle God into acquiescence in his rebellion. It is this static note about Peer which disappoints some readers who have founded their admiration for Ibsen on the later dramas. To them the great poem, with its perfect woman, Solveig, is a little lacking in the deep psychological interest that they expect; it is too alien to the movement, of which Goethe's *Faust* is the watchword, that regarded theology rather than religion, art rather than life, as the basis of reality. Such a criticism is unfair to the poem. *Peer Gynt* is perfectly free from the romantic fallacy that saved the hero, at the last moment, by cloaking his offences in the heroine's virtues. Peer is a picture of a man who never touches reality except once, in his love for Solveig. Now, it is not Solveig's love which saves him, passive, against the strength of great sins; it is his love for Solveig, his repentance and his recollection which, at the last moment, counterbalance his otherwise negative life. In the ordinary romantic story the legend is thus: At the end of life, the Devil holds the scales; into one scale he puts the hero's sins and wickednesses, then comes forward the heroine and slips her affection into the other scale, and straightway the Devil's scale kicks the beam. How different is Ibsen — The Button-Molder stands holding the scales. Into one he slips Peer Gynt; the scales quiver not a jot. Peer, in rage and despair, heaps into the scale his "half-way prate," his dreams, his fancies, his little greeds; still the scale

does not move. There is no real Peer at all. Then he remembers his one real offence, his sin against Solveig. He put that in — or makes to do so — when Solveig intervenes, puts Peer's real self into God's scale, and — wins a decisive victory? No — Ibsen is too true for that; but Solveig's action does move the scale, and Peer is given a last chance before the final visit of the Button-Molder.

This then is the main thought in *Peer Gynt*. Just as its irregular form is simply the sign of Ibsen's personality, so the idea of the play is that reality in personality is what counts most. Action is nothing without will; and will futile without motive. And the only certainly availing motive is love.

II

First of all *Peer Gynt* must be read and enjoyed as the great, fanciful, imaginative poem it is. Its secrets — far more can be discovered than the author ever meant — will only yield themselves to the lover, and I have no intention of submitting this gorgeous and capricious poem to a rigid analysis. Still its beauty as a sheer narrative reveals itself immediately, while some of its side-issues have been called obscure. The story is a folk-tale. That is not to be forgotten. Peer himself, the trolls, the Farm-Girls, the reindeer ride, all the most delightful adjuncts of the first three acts, are borrowed and generally improved from the Norwegian folk-stories.

Generally Ibsen was content with taking these properties and intensifying their values. But a poem like *Peer Gynt* takes some time to write, and when Ibsen

was writing the last two acts he yields more and more to the temptation to give symbolic values to the old characters. Sometimes he is content with a mere parallelism. For instance, the monkeys of Act IV, Scene 4, correspond to the imps in the Dovrë-King's hall; the horse, in Act IV, Scene 5, corresponds to the pig on which Peer and the Green-Clad One gallop away. These hints, as it were, of a dream-life help the unity of the play tremendously, and Ibsen never made the mistake of over-using them. But he is not always content with just a correspondence. In Act II, Scene 7, the Boyg looms vastly enough; and, as the story proceeds, Peer Gynt's repetition of "Roundabout, said the Boyg," his reiteration of the deadly chant,

Backwards and forwards, 't is just as long;
In and out, and it 's strait as strong,

gives a sinister color to the Great Boyg and his meaning. Finally Peer's identification of the Boyg with the Sphinx surely shows us plainly enough that Peer Gynt himself is in the position of the old seeker after the Secret. Death, spiritual or bodily, is the penalty for shirking the secret of the Sphinx; so you cannot circumvent the Boyg, you can only conquer him by answering. I should have thought it was impossible for any one to mistake the meaning of the Boyg; but I confess that the meaning of the King of the Dovrë is much more difficult. To identify him with Memnon, as does Peer, is no help at all, because there is no suitable legend about Memnon; and the King's reappearance in the Fifth Act is one of the most unsatisfactory and casually-written scenes in the play, one of the few where Ibsen descends to a kind of poetical journalism

only just tolerable in the poem, because it is so in keeping with Peer's character.

What means this motto of the Dovrë: "Troll, to thyself be enough"? Did Ibsen intend to satirize the doctrine which Emerson preached in his essay on "Self-Reliance"? What exact meaning did he attach to the word "egotist"? Not, I think, that abundant self-sufficiency which another master pilloried in Sir Wiloughby, nor the savage pride that slew Coriolanus. Peer was not capable of either of those emotions, nor indeed was the Dovrë-King. It is obvious that Ibsen, for one thing, was jousting at what he held was the narrow-minded nationalism of his fellow countrymen; he was indeed satirizing an actual political and social movement that corresponded roughly to the Irish Sinn Féin. But he meant something more than mere satire of political opponents. It is the "Dovrish enough" which is going to damn Peer Gynt; it is, for Ibsen, the rigid line that marks off real men and women from "hill-trolls." I incline myself to the view, as I have stated in a note, that what Ibsen is attacking is the particular form of monomania which we now know as the gospel of the Superman. Nietzsche himself, or rather Zarathustra, is insistent that the Superman will be quite unlike Man; and that is true; he will be a hill-troll, not a god. Nietzsche's doctrine is so inconsistent with itself, and his repetition of it so full of ignorances, that it is not easy to give any definite form to the Superman. But it has this in common with the hill-troll — the Superman, like the hill-troll, is self-circumferenced as well as self-centred. Here is, I think, to be found the real meaning of the "fatal enough": some students of Ibsen have found the attack on self-

sufficiency in *Peer Gynt* difficult to reconcile with Ibsen's vehement preaching of self-realization in his other work. The two are really complementary. What is wrong with the troll doctrine is not the emphasis laid on "self," it is the emphasis put on "enough." A man can not realise himself at all without contact with his fellow creatures. "The strongest man in the world is the man who stands most alone," is put into Stockmann's mouth. Dr. Stockmann is alone, but not separate; he is defiant, not ignoring; he fights, he does not forget. So, even at its strongest and most aggressive, Ibsen's doctrine of self-realization (if we identify him with Dr. Stockmann) is not inconsistent with the condemnation of that selfish individualism which we find in *Peer Gynt*. That individualism is, after all, in one of the most forcible passages in the poem, described as madness. It is only in the mad-house, at the end of the Fourth Act, that *Peer Gynt* meets people who are really themselves.

Here a man is himself, and can utterly sever
Everything else from himself for ever.
Here, full sail, as ourselves our course we make.
Each in the barrel of self down plunges
And ferments, and soon all but self expunges;
And seals, with self's bung, self's citadel,
And seasons the staves in self's deep well.
No one has tears for the other's disasters;
What the other's ideas are, no one masters.
Ourselves, that we are in thought and tone,
Ourselves, to the spring-board's uttermost verge.

It is this, surely, which Ibsen wants us to think of as the inevitable outcome of the *Dovrë* doctrine.

Beside the evidence furnished by the passage in the mad-house scene, there are two positive interpretations given us of what the poet means by true self-realization. I mention them in order of importance. In the

Fifth Act, Scene 9, Peer asks the Button-Molder point-blank,

To be oneself, what 's it at bottom mean ?

And the Button-Molder replies :

To be oneself is : oneself to slay.

But that answer is no doubt thrown away on you ?

And so we 'll say : everywhere to display

Like a signboard, Master's meaning upon you.

Here the Button-Molder is not altogether free from Peer's own fault, quoting old axioms without due thought. The Dominical injunction "Whosoever wills to save his self shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his self for my sake shall save it," cannot be taken apart from its complementary warning, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own self? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his self?" — a warning that Peer misremembers and misapplies in the First Scene of Act IV. It is obvious that mere self-sacrifice is as futile as mere self-indulgence; nor, to my mind, does the Button-Molder's enlarged exposition of the meaning of self-realization carry us much further. No, for the best interpretation of Ibsen's meaning, and of its strong contrast with Peer's ideal, one must look at one of the most dignified and impressive scenes in the play — the sermon in Act V, Scene 3. It would be a mistake to give unqualified praise to the poor man who evaded what the world¹ is fond of calling "greater responsibilities" in order to do his immediate or personal duty; but surely here is the exact antithesis of Peer's selfishness. This unnamed lad, who suffered scorn and self-mutilation rather than desert his betrothed, his unborn child

¹ The world of men particularly.

and his old mother may not be the world's hero, but he does stand definitely for a keen, dogged faithfulness to others, in which alone self-realization can be found. Ibsen emphasizes the difference between this man and Peer, by putting into Peer's mouth, after the end of the sermon, words claiming this man who found himself as "a comrade in spirit."

Peer trusts too much to our bad memories when he makes that claim. In no scene in any play has Ibsen so impressed on us the gulf between motive and action.

The Light of Light

Looks always on the motive, not the deed;
The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone.

Peer has shirked civil duties, social duties, patriotic duties: the man with the sickle shirked them, too. Yet one can rightly claim our praise, the other can only earn contempt. And Peer is lying even when he implies that there is an external similarity to the casual observer. For, after all, the lad *did* cut off his finger: and Peer —? his own words bear witness against him.

But to chop——? To cut off for good and all——
Yes, think of it; wish it done—*will* it, withal;—
But to *do* it! No; that's beyond my discerning!

So over against Peer the play gives us this poor, humble, timid man who yet, in a crisis, possessed his own soul securely, and dared to sacrifice for the sake of Love and truth everything that the selfish man holds most dearly.

We must not shrink from the conclusion that Ibsen, in *Peer Gynt*, attacks self-sufficiency, from the fact that Brand, the hero of his other great dramatic poem, comes not a little under the condemnation. I have tried to show elsewhere that the popular idea of *Brand* as a

tragedy of a sublime figure conquered by circumstance is a false one. I believe Ibsen — possibly only in the course of the poem — himself saw Brand's essential weakness (a weakness so much more fatal because more sublime than Peer Gynt's) and that the tragedy of Brand is that of a soul false to that inner self, and that more glorious ideal, which ultimately gain expression in the thunder of avalanche and storm.

The Dovrë-King himself is, then, less important than his symbolic significance. He is the only character whose poetical being is overweighted by his moral — and, at his final appearance, this certainly spoils what might otherwise have been a great scene. We feel the poet becoming rather too explanatory, particularly in the passage about troll journalism; and also in the facetious comments on the Dovrë-King's fabulous nature.

There are none other of the characters, either legendary or actual, who do not justify themselves. We may think the Strange Passenger rather too vague in his impressive interruptions, and feel that the introduction of the Devil is a little too much on the other side of farce: but that the Strange Passenger — put into the play “out of caprice” — is impressive few will deny; and the Devil's arrival needs no gloss. He was bound to follow the Button-Molder. What I would insist on is that the reader who comes fresh to *Peer Gynt* should remember first the poetic value of the characters. It is only so that he will gain any true insight into their symbolic significance, if and where there is any. It cannot be said too often that the poetic value of *Peer Gynt* is primary; the satirical, symbolic and religious values subsidiary.

III

What then is the poetic content of *Peer Gynt*? Its glorious quality of creative and rhythmical surprise, its splendor of youth and exuberance, its sheer beauty, its tense truth and candor, its almost perfect concentration on the character of Peer Gynt, are things that only those who can read the original can fully appreciate. Still one hopes — otherwise this version would never have been attempted — that the essence of the poem has not entirely evaded the translator, and can be conveyed, however faultily, to the English reader. Anyway, those sheer poetical qualities of presentation must make their own appeal; but it may be useful to add a word or two on Peer Gynt's character — not so much from the symbolic, as the poetic standpoint.

Peer Gynt is a new person in poetry. There are qualities about him which have affinities with Falstaff; and there are yet others in which he can call cousin with Hamlet; but he is, even when he is old, far more of a youth than either of Shakespeare's creations. That, perhaps, is the first note in him that insists and claims to be heard. Peer Gynt is a boy. He is one of those who go through the world trusting more to "charm" than to any more solid quality: and his charm carries him far. His mother, though she knows its value, is always beaten down by it in the end; the enmity it excites among the other youths is largely the enmity of jealousy; it entrances Solveig; it makes Ingrid consent to the wild elopement — and there is hardly a scene in the play in which it does not, in the most disconcerting way, confuse the judgment of the reader.

This particular quality has not often been successfully conveyed in literature; Peer Gynt is more easily paralleled from real life — he recalls Sheridan or Fox, or, to go higher, Shelley. It is only in a certain adventurousness that he can recall such a hero as Tom Jones: shallow though it be, there is a stream of poetry in Peer Gynt, quite absent from the veins of the Foundling.

Yet the poverty of Peer's poetical quality strikes the reader almost as much as its presence. The reason for its scanty running is evident enough. Peer is the slave, not of imagination, but of fancy. The prosaic man's habit of dreaming, of seeking refuge from real life in slight, desultory day-dreams, has caught Peer. Partly encouraged by his mother's character and example, it has a firm hold on him long before the play opens, and it only relaxes its grip when he is within the sight and sound of Solveig. It is so much Peer's master that he cannot distinguish between his dreams and his truths. In that sordid, terrible auction scene — the depth of his degradation — Solveig's hymn-book is cried for auction along with the rubbish of the Dovrë, the desert and the mad-house. Peer, in his own untruthful fashion, has turned even Love into a thing of light laughter and easy tears, a thing of shallow sentiment and windy regret — and he has to be rid of that, to feel himself stripped and stark before he can see the hut again, before his ears can be opened to Solveig's song of the home-coming.

Then Peer not only values fancy and the things of fancy above imagination; but he adopts his fancies second-hand. No doubt when Ibsen started the poem, he had not thought out what exact use he would make

of the old legend on which the story of Peer Gynt is based. But, as the play grew under his hands, he saw, in these old scraps and fragments of ballads and fairy-tales, wonderful material for illustrating Peer's derivative genius, his borrowed and unessential character. Peer, in this, is surely related to Gregers Werle, only, unlike Gregers, he has finally the courage and sense to know that his relations with Solveig are on a more real and sacred footing than his other experiences. Peer lives in dreams, and in other men's dreams. Even his escapade with Ingrid is, Åse hints, inspired by the recollection of tales told him by the fireside; and in his middle age he surrounds with the glamour of a shoddy romanticism the cruel degradation of the liaison with the Green-Clad One, the ignoble struggle with the imps of the Dovrë.

I have not counted the number of times that Peer is thrust into quotation to justify or explain his actions: but he is always ready to fly to precedent, to base his opinions on others' judgements, to choose glibly the first philosophic tag that presents itself. It is, perhaps, this characteristic which makes Peer so singularly typical of the nineteenth century. It was this in him which caused me, in my essay on Ibsen, to call Peer Gynt a "pinch-beck Shelley." My friend Mr. Robert Lynd objects to the phrase and claims Peer Gynt as Everyman. I doubt if there is really much difference between us. Peer Gynt *is* Everyman of the nineteenth century: but so was Shelley. Nothing seems more curious to us to-day than to think that in his own time Shelley was stoned as a heresiarch; and that the even more remote rationalistic age, of which Mr. Shaw was once the exponent, hailed the author of *Queen Mab* as

“a pioneer.” Shelley, of course, was the apotheosis of the ordinary Protestant Englishman of his day. His lack of humor; his hatred of “priestcraft”; his exaggerated interest in, and respect for, science; his keen sense of justice; his passionate loyalty to blunt truth; his engaging and embarrassing candor — are all qualities, good, bad and indifferent, which mark the nineteenth-century Englishman. Shelley’s subservience to Godwin — the dirtiest wittol that was ever mistaken for a philosopher — should alone have given the key to his character, that of a man not at all skilled in ideas, with no temper or taste for independent thought, and an infinite capacity for obedience, a capacity which, in the disorganised intellectual state of Europe, had got no proper object, and so ran into bondage to any plausible and pernicious mountebank.¹

But Shelley, in all this, is typical, perhaps slightly in anticipation, of that nineteenth-century Englishman who followed many prophets to many different hills, and then prepared for the master’s offering many different sacrifices. The nineteenth century was a time of great men, of heroes, as one of the loudest of its prophets would declare, not because its great men were greater than those of other epochs — but because there was a vast and growing body of smaller men who demanded heroes and hero-worship. That worship, the antithesis of true freedom in thought, was given lav-

¹ I am not forgetting the extremely early age at which Shelley died. It would not really even be necessary to discuss his philosophy seriously, if it had not been for the mistaken efforts of his admirers to push into prominence what was, after all, only the ill-digested thoughts of a precocious and easily influenced boy. The gift for supreme lyrical poetry goes but rarely with any aptitude for deep thinking; and Shelley, had he lived to maturity, would have been content with the crown that is inalienably his.

ishly; it annoyed or amused the really great, men like Thackeray or Browning; it spoiled the lesser great, such as Carlyle or Bradlaugh or Tennyson; and a few, men of that singular modesty that only goes with supreme genius, Scott and Darwin and Newman, managed somehow to evade the tribute of folly and homage.

Peer Gynt sums up all this misdirected talent for obedience and credulity in a way that no other character in literature does. From the nature of the poem his heroes are not men, but men's opinions; things half-remembered and never really grasped, phrases and axioms and saws that Peer can only apply as if he was a figure in a folk-tale, not use as would a real person in a genuine crisis.

This characteristic of his, besides ensuring for Peer Gynt a permanence of interest to the student, only second to that of Antigone, Medea or Hamlet, adds enormously to the vivid power of the play, as a study of human nature. Some may find Peer's never-ceasing adaptability, his readiness in all crises, to be at first a hindrance to getting any true grasp of his character; but as the play goes on, its truth and certainty, illustrated as it is by each instance of untruth and uncertainty, grip yet more and more; and when action draws to its close, through the wonderful, hanging mist of that early Whitsun morn, one feels not only the truth of Peer's infinite and changing variety, but also the truth of his fixed and certain centre, his love for, and his dependence on Solveig.

One turns gladly to the lighter elements in Peer's character, and to the good side of his lying and dreaming. Is there any great poem that has a gayer, more

lovable hero? Odysseus alone, to my mind, can compare with the ragged, cheerful, impudent rascal of the first three acts. The incomparable ending of its first scene — the quick changes in the wedding scene, from gay to grave, from frivolous to bitter, from farce to tragedy, are all made possible and plausible by the chameleon character of the hero. Most readers are embarrassed by Peer's portly and pompous appearance at the beginning of Act IV, but I believe the abrupt change to be artistically sound. Nothing less sudden and startling would have given us a true idea of the degree and nature of Peer's downward course. The comic power of the poem is as admirable as the deep and rarer note of tragedy and gloom, and is sustained with as sure a precision. There is no modern book, except the *Pilgrim's Progress*, so full of the spirit of adventure, and at the same time so full of the real stuff of life and poetry: there are scenes in *Peer Gynt* that Dumas might have conceived and Butler written — there are others that no one but Ibsen could have either conceived or written, that place *Peer Gynt* above *Faust*, and its author above all modern poets save the author of *The Ring and the Book*.

It is worthy of notice that Peer's lightness and gaiety of nature, his variety and multi-colored charm, render possible the flamboyant and decorative excesses of the poem. For me Act IV, though it may have been an afterthought, is a vital and essential part of the poem. Without it *Peer Gynt* would not be the supreme poem it is; and I fancy that those critics who have been disposed to frown on its exuberance have not paused to think how much would be lost if we cut out the episodes in the Desert, the scenes with Anitra, and

the frantic happenings in Egypt. I do not see how else Ibsen could have given to Peer that spirit of cosmopolitanism, that false air of civilized security which the hero has to attain, before he completes his history. Before excising any scene as unnecessary or superfluous, before removing any character as impertinent and unwanted, let the reader consider whether that scene or that character does not interpret yet another mood of Peer Gynt, does not illuminate yet another corner in his shifty soul. I do not say the treatment of every character is satisfactory — there are many signs of haste both in the Fourth and Fifth Acts — but there is no character and no scene with which any one who really understands the poem would willingly dispense.

IV

Of the other characters in the book only two demand any detailed notice — Åse and Solveig. I would just point out how decisive and firm is the drawing of Ingrid, a character who looks back to Hjördis and forward to Hedda — how admirably Mads Moën is given us in the three or four lines he speaks in the First Act, and his drunken maudlin sentences in the Fifth — and how supremely, in the Anitra episode, Ibsen fashions that particular form of sexual silliness which overtakes middle-aged gentlemen of doubtful pasts. Anitra — again she has but a few lines to speak — is as vivid as Fanny Wilton, and as real as one of the little managing baggages of the Restoration drama. But the minor characters must yield in interest, as they do in importance, to Peer's mother and to his bride.

That Ibsen used his own mother as the model for

Åse was of more interest to him than to us; what is supremely exciting about the portrait of Åse, and the picture of her relations with Peer, is that for the first time in literature we have portrayed the love of a mother and son without any sentiment and without any falsehood. Here Ibsen owes a good deal to his having adopted the old folk-tale which makes Peer a country lad; and he adds himself two other advantages: he makes Åse a widow, and poor. For the country poor in all nations have a frankness of speech and a candor in their relations that is unknown in other classes. This candor is not at all incompatible with kindness, but it allows itself a freedom of intercourse that seems incredible to the more sophisticated town-dweller.

Åse is, from her first appearance, dominant, eager, quick, susceptible and loving. She will abuse Peer — no one else may: she will beat him — and any one else who tries to do so. She will call him liar, and repeat his lies proudly to new acquaintances. In spite of her angry, petulant, extravagant behavior, Solveig goes naturally to her for information about Peer; and finds nothing in what she hears that does not strengthen her desire to go to the outcast. Åse, it is true, suffers from Peer's own complaint. She dreams, and thinks her dreams are realities; but she has a firmer basis than Peer has; her life has one purpose, at any rate, which Peer lacks until he meets Solveig, her purpose to care for and shield her boy. That is real: and that triumphs.

The deliberate, beautiful cobweb-spinning of the death-scene it is impossible to treat roughly. The scene is always compared to the death of Brand's mother, and generally there is a note of blame for Peer as com-

pared with the stark prophet of "All or Nothing." Yet is this quite fair? Peer has just come through, by evasion — but by an evasion that has cost him real agony — the greatest torture of his life — and can we expect that he, or any other human being, should not look around for an anodyne against the overwhelming pain? He finds it there, by the poor truckle-bed where his mother lies dying: with all the skill of his craft he beguiles, he lies — if you will — the old woman into the arms of death. It is not heroic: and yet would any other behavior have been half as adequate, half as real and essentially true, with such a case as Åse?

She herself is full of nothing but anxiety for her son; and only so, only by recalling his youth and her younger days, can Peer prevent her from dwelling on the tragic business of Ingrid and the outlawry.

Ibsen's creative style is shown at its highest by the manner in which Åse's character is built up by its contact with others. Not only by description, not only by her son's laughing or indignant comment, not only by her own speeches does Åse gradually display herself. In her brief, abrupt retorts to Aslak and Ingrid's father, in the kind of awed condescension with which she speaks to Solveig's father, and in the proud mother-spirit of her replies to Solveig herself — in all these we gain, with each sentence, almost with each word, further insight into her character. Then how admirably, in the scene with Kari, are we allowed to see Åse in her own proper position, evidenced by the respect shown by Kari to her, even in her lamentable misfortune? This art of revealing one character by the aid of another, to make each trivial incident and word have its due effect in the whole, is one of the

greatest secrets of the supreme dramatist or novelist, and it is one which Ibsen mastered early, and used with an effect and an art that have never been excelled and rarely equalled.

I have heard it objected to Solveig that her character is stationary. I have already discussed the same objection as applied to Peer, and the same answer serves, with a difference, for Solveig. The chief difference is that Solveig is more of a lyrical than an epic character. She, perhaps, reminds one most of those splendid people in Browning's supremest poems, such as the Duchess, or the Lady of *The Statue and the Bust*, or Christina — people who are almost violently individual, and yet also sum up a moral, an emotion, an ideal.

Solveig is stationary. That is her saga. But it is not right to say that Solveig at seventy is the same as Solveig at seventeen; no, rather Solveig at seventeen is the same as Solveig at seventy. At her first meeting with Peer she is his wife, his love, his guardian — guardian not of his actions, nor of his errant thoughts, nor of his wanton dreams; they belong to Ingrid, or the Farm-Girls or the Green-Clad One — but guardian of that greater and more real self, which only exists in her, and for her, and through her. What Ibsen means — what so many of his critics have so grossly missed — by that sentence, "In my faith, in my hope, in my love art thou," is *not* that Peer is rescued from his disastrous past by Solveig's love, but that there has never been any other Peer than the one who fell in love with Solveig. That is all there is that is real in him, all that is true, all that is permanent. And nothing can alter the fact that this has been, and

therefore is. This love is the only element in him that has reality or permanence, and nothing can destroy what has once really existed. Love is eternal; that is, it belongs to a sphere and an order where decay is not, outside time and beyond peace. This may be unpalatable to some who have called themselves Ibsenites, but it is the plain meaning of Solveig and Peer, and it is frequently enunciated in other plays of Ibsen. It is this which renders true what I have said above, but the Solveig of the first meeting is really the Solveig of the climax. She is the only person in the play who is, all through, belonging to the things that are not seen, to the things that are eternal; and in touching her Peer Gynt has laid hold on the profundities, and no Button-Molder can ever retain him.

Solveig's person is as beautiful to me as Solveig's place in the play. I know no scene to excel that poignant episode in the Third Act when she comes over the snow to the outlawed Peer. In simplicity, in sweetness, and in directness of appeal those few pages challenge comparison with any love-scene in any literature. Ibsen, writing in Italy, manages to combine the freshness and vigor of his native north with the charm and glow of the south, and we have this beautiful scene where passion does not forget to be tender, and love burns with the bright and splendid flame of desire.

After that Third Act, after the parting, we only see Solveig once before the end. With a contrast almost stunning, Ibsen breaks into the riot and wanton waste of the hot African scenes, and for a minute shows us Solveig sitting lonely, singing the song of the home-coming, the home-coming of Peer who has just been abandoned by Anitra, and is on his way to the mad-house.

There is no need to enlarge on the climax of the poem, when Peer at last "comes home." There, in the hut, Solveig has waited, secure in the reality of Love — knowing that the only judgment, when it is uttered, will be the proclamation of her Peer against the world's Peer, will be to call back to life the boy who has wandered so far away. There she sits, with her transvaluation of all values; skilled is she in the use of the only transcending and reforming power in the world, sure in her wisdom, confident in her right. And the last challenge of the Button-Molder, which Peer will have to meet one day, can be met with boldness and assurance; for Peer, if he has not found his sin-list, has found himself, and in the discovery of self, follows the discovery of sin, and with that discovery, self-deception has an end.

V

I return, then, to where I began, the greatness and significance of personality. It was his vivid sense of this which made Ibsen so hostile to institutions and organizations, so nearly anarchist in his views about the State and society. But he was saved from the excess of this anarchy by the poet in him — that in his nature which made him aware that there is no such thing as a lonely personality. When a man is absolutely alone, he dies. From this it is but a step to the further realization that man can only perfectly realize himself by his relations with his fellows. For Ibsen this relation was heightened — and, if you will, hallowed — into the one supreme relation of Love. Beside that fact, all others, even the power of hate (how

wretched is the "converted" and bitter Einar of *Brand*), fail: no doubt this is a weakness in Ibsen, this strong sense of one truth; but it also accounts for the depth and reality of his work. He had seen the sun, and he had no patience or time to praise the stars and the moon. He knew that there was one thing necessary; and so he ignores the things that are merely desirable or convenient. Tolstoy, who has been himself accused of over-idealism, complained at the publication of "When We Dead Awaken," that Ibsen was getting too far away from the drab facts of life, the struggle and the need for bread and water. Can we not see in this complaint a shadow of a suspicion that, in spite of his apparently incongruous life, the Norwegian had been more faithful to the centre than he had himself? The generations to come may ignore much of Ibsen's work. They may be neglectful of his problems, of his realism, of his grim and sardonic humor; but one thing they will assuredly remember and reward, his single-eyed devotion to truth and reality. And of all his plays, while others may give intenser and minuter pictures of men and women, *Peer Gynt* presents, in the most vivid and enduring form, the poet's vision of Life.

VI

The chief aim of this translation of *Peer Gynt* is to give some idea of that luxuriant complexity of rhyme and metre which marks the original. I have endeavored to be as literal as possible; but have abandoned mere fidelity without hesitation, when the effect was too unnatural or displeasing. I fear many readers may think, even as it is, I have occasionally been too bold.

The metres I have tried to render exactly throughout the play.

The rhyme-schemes I have generally kept to, in sustained lyrical or ironical monologues, such as Åse's speech when searching for Peer; Peer's dreamy vision of renaissance; his agony over the disaster to the yacht; and the other soliloquies in the Fourth Act. Also in the death-scene of Åse; in the thread-ball scene, and in the final pages I have kept as closely as possible to the Norwegian. In such narrative passages as occur in the first scene of all I have allowed myself greater freedom, as the sequence of rhymes in the original strikes me as haphazard or merely dictated by expediency and facility.

I have generally represented treble or double rhymes by treble and double rhymes in my translation; but with regard to such a pair of words as "løgne" "øgne," I thought it would be pedantic to refuse the obvious "lies" "eyes."

As most readers of this book will know, there has been only one previous version of *Peer Gynt* — that by Mr. William and Mr. Charles Archer. I may as well state at the outset, that without that version, mine would never have been attempted or accomplished. Their version was almost my first introduction to Ibsen; and there was a time when I knew much of it by heart. Their translation is, of course, as literal as was consistent with preserving the metres of the original; mine is hampered by also keeping the rhymes. Yet when, as is so often the case, a plain forcible rendering, used by Messrs. Archer, suits my version, I have not fumbled about to discover a phrasing that should be merely different.

I have to thank the late Mr. Stanley Makower for encouragement and a few very useful suggestions; and to Mr. William Archer I owe a debt in return for information freely placed at my disposal, and for his generous attitude to my translation.

PEER GYNT

THE PERSONS

ÅSE, *a farmer's widow*

PEER GYNT, *her son*

TWO OLD WOMEN

ASLAK, *a smith*

WEDDING GUESTS, KITCHEN-MASTER, FIDDLER, &c.

A NEWCOMER AND HIS WIFE

SOLVEIG AND LITTLE HELGA, *their daughters*

THE FARMER AT HEGSTAD

INGRID, *his daughter*

THE BRIDEGROOM AND HIS PARENTS

THREE OUT-FARM GIRLS (SÆTER-GIRLS)

A GREEN-CLAD WOMAN

THE OLD MAN OF THE DOVRË

A TROLL COURTIER

TROLL WOMEN AND TROLL IMPS. TWO WITCHES.

NIXIES, BOGIES, HOB-GOBLINS, &c.

AN UGLY BRAT. A VOICE IN THE DARKNESS. BIRD
CRIES

KARI, *a cottar's widow*

MASTER COTTON

MONSIEUR BALLON

HERR V. EBERKOPF

HERR V. TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

A THIEF AND A RECEIVER

ANITRA, *a Sheik's daughter*

ARABS, SLAVES, DANCING-GIRLS, &c.

} *Travelling Gentlemen*

MEMNON'S STATUE, *a singing character*

THE SPHINX OF GIZEH, *persona muta*

BEGRIFFENFELDT, PROFESSOR, PH.D., *head of the
lunatic asylum at Cairo*

HUHU, *a language reformer from the coast of Malabar*

HUSSEIN, *an Oriental Minister of State*

A FELLAH, with a Royal Mummy

A NORWEGIAN SKIPPER AND HIS CREW

A STRANGE PASSENGER

A PRIEST

MOURNERS

A BAILIFF

A BUTTON-MOLDER

A LEAN ONE

PEER GYNT

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE ONE

A wooded hillside near Åse's farm. A river rushes down the hill. An old mill-shed on the further side of the river. It is a hot summer day.

Peer Gynt, a sturdy youth of twenty, comes down the path. Åse, his mother, small and slight, follows. She is scolding angrily.

ÅSE

Peer, you 're lying.

PEER GYNT (*without stopping*)

No! Not I!

ÅSE

If your story 's true, swear to it!

PEER GYNT

Why should I swear?

ÅSE

You dare not do it!

It 's a lie, a lie, a lie!

PEER GYNT (*stopping*)

Each blessed word of it is true.

ÅSE (*facing him*)

How can you face your mother? You —!

Just when work is worst, you rush

Off to hunt thro' snow and slush;

Then with clothes in rags and tatters
Home you come; and what more matters,
Lose your gun and kill no game:
And with round and innocent eyes
Want me to believe your lame
Catalogue of hunter's lies! —
Where was it on the buck you strayed?

PEER GYNT

West by Gendin.

ÅSE (*laughing scornfully*)

Really, yes?

PEER GYNT

In the storm the alders sway'd;
There the buck, behind the row,
Scraped for lichen in the mess
Of the slush ——

ÅSE (*as before*)

Yes? Really, yes?

PEER GYNT

Breathlessly I stood and listened,
Heard his hard hoof crunch the snow;
Saw where one great antler glistened:
Then I dropped amid the boulders,
On my belly crawled, so quiet
Where from 'vantage I could spy at
Such a buck! so big! such shoulders
Larger than any ——

ÅSE

Oh! I know,

Much, much larger.

PEER GYNT

Bang! and down

Dropped the deer upon the snow.
Scarcely had he fallen, when lo!
I was sitting him astride
With his left ear in my grasp:
And had plunged, right to the hasp,
Where the neck and skull divide,
My keen blade, when with a cry,
To his feet the huge brute leaping,
Jerked his head back, quickly sweeping
Knife and sheath away. My thigh
And my legs were squeezed so tightly;
With his horns he held and gripped me,
Like a pair of tongs he nipped me —
Thus, as quick as said, we two
Rushed along the edge! — or flew!

ÅSE (*involuntarily*)

Jesus! Save us! Save ——

PEER GYNT

Have you

Seen the Gendin-Edge? So lightly
Like a scythe, straight on it stretches,
Stretches on for nigh four miles.
Over screes the vision fetches,
Over glaciers, landslips, piles
Of grey rubble, then it rests
On the sluggish tarns that sleep
Far below the mountain-crests,
Tarns seven hundred fathom deep!
On the edge the buck and I
Cut our pathway through the sky.
Such a colt I ne'er bestrode!
'Fore us 't was as though there hung
Suns that shone, as on we swung.

We saw many an eagle float
Brown-backt on his dizzy road
'Twixt the tarn and us; and then
Dwindle to a sun-fleckt mote,
As we passed him. On the shore
Ice-floes crashed: I heard no sound.
Only I heard, as in a swoond,
Giddy sprites that danced around,
Danced and sang and danced again,
Danced to where they were before!

ÅSE (*dizzy*)

God preserve me!

PEER GYNT

In my face,
At a hopeless break-neck place,
Up there rose a ptarmigan,
Flapping, clucking, terrified,
Whence 't was hidden on a ledge
Near the buck's feet on the edge.
Then the buck swerved round and shying,
First to scale the heavens trying,
Plunged right down, down, buck and man!
(*Åse totters and clutches at a tree trunk. Peer Gynt goes on*)
Mountains, black, behind uprist,
Yawned the plumbless deep below!
First we clove through banks of mist,
Then we broke, like driven snow,
Gulls, which, as their flock was parted
Here and there with screamings started.
Downward, downward still we darted!
Something whitish glistened there
'Neath us like deer's belly-fur.

Our reflexion, mother, dear!
Mirror'd in the waters clear,
Rushing to the tarn's smooth face
At the same tremendous pace
That we sought the deep's embrace!

ÅSE (*gasping for breath*)

Peer! God help me! Quick! What more?

PEER GYNT

Buck from over, buck from under,
Met and clasht like rolling thunder,
All about us foam-flecks dashing.
There we lay, my mother, splashing;
But we made the northern shore
Somehow at the last: the buck, he
Swam and I clung fast behind him.
I ran homewards ——

ÅSE

The deer, ducky?

PEER GYNT

May be in the self-same spot;
(*Snaps his fingers, turns on his heel, and adds*)
You may keep him, if you find him!

ÅSE

And your neck is sound? You've not
Smasht completely both your thighs?
Sure you have n't broke your spine?
Lord! To Thee my thanks shall rise,
Thee, who helped this boy of mine!
True a rent in pants and coat is;
But that's hardly worthy notice,
When one thinks that anything
Might have come from such a spring!

(Stops suddenly, looks at him open-mouthed and staring, cannot find words at first, and finally bursts out)

Oh! what friends' tales you've been spinning!

Holy Cross! what lies you tell!

All this screed, from the beginning,

You would stuff me with, I knew it

As a girl, I knew it well.

It was Gudbrand Glesne, who it

Happen'd to, not you ——

PEER GYNT

Me too.

Such a thing again might happen.

ÅSE

Yes, a lie turned upside-down

Can be brushed to look like new;

None can tell its carcase brown

When it has fine clothes to wrap in.

That is just what you've been doing,

Vamping up these tales of ruin;

Then with eagles' backs you garnisht

And with other terrors varnisht,

Jesting there and lying here

Till I held my breath for fear,

And I knew not what of old,

As a girl, I had been told!

PEER GYNT

Oh! If any other said

Things like that, I'd well-nigh slay him!

ÅSE *(weeping)*

Would to God that I lay dead,

Dead, and 'neath the black earth dreaming:

Prayers and tears can never slay him —

Peer! you're lost beyond redeeming.

PEER GYNT

Darling, pretty mummikins,
You are right about my sins:
There! be nice, be happy ——

ÅSE

Peace!

How can I have happiness,
I, with such a swine for son?
Shame and scorn, beyond denial
Are to me a grievous trial,
Me, a widow, poor and lone. (*Weeping again*)
What have we now of the glory
Left us by your grandsire hoary?
Where are now the piles of gold
Rasmus Gynt acquired of old?
In your father's time they wander'd
Off; like sand the cash he squander'd;
Buying acres near and far,
Driving in a golden car.
Where is all the wealth in vain spent
At that famous entertainment,
When each guest sent bottles reeling
At the wall, or to the ceiling?

PEER GYNT

Where 's the snow of yester-year?

ÅSE

Hold your tongue before your mother!
See the farm-house! Every other
Pane is stuffed with clouts. And here
Hedges flat, and gates a-rattle,
Rain and cold beat on the cattle,
Fields and meadows lying fallow;
Every month a new distraint is ——

PEER GYNT

Cease these foolish tales to holloa!
Just when fortune down and faint is,
Up she leaps as high as ever!

ÅSE

If the soil is salt-strewn, never.
Lord! But you 're a mighty lad!
Just as brisk and just as bad,
Just as bold as when the Vicar
Fresh from Copenhagen College
Asked your name, and swore your knowledge
Would do credit to a prince;
Not a prince could answer quicker!
And your poor dear father, since
He was pleased with flum and pap,
Gave the man a horse and trap.
Then 't was fun and feasting great!
Parson, captain and the others
Day by day would eat and swill,
Stuffing till they nigh got ill.
But 't is need such friendship smothers.
All was still and desolate
On the day that "Nothing-lack John"
Went out with his pedlar's pack on.
(*Wipes her eyes with her apron*)
Peer! you 're big and strong of arm,
You should be a prop and stay
To your mother's failing day,
You should manage field and farm,
Guard the remnant that 's your own;—
(*Weeping once more*)
Ah! God help me, nought but harm
Have you brought to me, you drone!

Lounging lazy by the ingle,
With the coal the hearth-stone sharing;
Or, at feasts where young folks mingle,
All the lasses you 'd be scaring.
Everywhere you shame and mock me.
Then your fights with rascals shock me ——

PEER GYNT (*turning away*)

Let me be!

ÅSE (*following*)

Dare you deny
You were chief among the rabble
In that mighty, famous squabble
Fought at Lundë, when the men
Raged like crazy dogs? That then
It was you — or p'raps 't was I! —
Broke Smith Aslak's arm — at least
Put his finger out, you beast!

PEER GYNT

Who has fill'd you with such lies?

ÅSE (*hotly*)

Kari heard the yells and thumping!

PEER GYNT (*rubbing his elbow*)

Yes, you might have heard my cries.

ÅSE

Yours?

PEER GYNT

Yes, mine. I got a clumping.

ÅSE

What?

PEER GYNT

Well, he's a lusty fellow.

ÅSE

Who is?

PEER GYNT

Aslak made me bellow.

ÅSE

Shame — and shame! O take my curses!
Oh! to think that my son worse is
Than a sot, a wastrel, drunken
Beast in profligacy sunken. (*Weeping again*)
Shame is mine; things go amiss;
But that this should happen, this
Beats all other miseries!
Tho' the smith is lusty, need he,
Peer, my son, be weak and weedy?

PEER GYNT

Whether I am beat or beating
Still complaints you 'll be repeating. (*Laughing*)
Cheer up ——

ÅSE

What? again you 're lying?

PEER GYNT

Yes; but just this once, my mother.
Dry your eyes and stop your crying
(*Clenches his left hand*)
With this fellow and no other
I held Aslak, tightly; plying
My right like a hammer's blows.

ÅSE

O, you scamp, with feats like those
You 'll bring me to the tomb!

PEER GYNT

No: you 're worth a better doom,
Much, much better shall befall you.
Little ugly mother dear,
You can trust me, never fear

All the place a queen shall call you;
Only wait till I, victorious,
Do some — well, do something glorious!

ÅSE (*contemptuously*)

You!

PEER GYNT

None knows how fortune flits.

ÅSE

Could you ever have the wits
One day so to sew the stitches
That you need to mend your breeches!

PEER GYNT (*hotly*)

I will be a king, a kaiser!

ÅSE

Oh! the boy's but little wiser
Than a fool. God pity me!

PEER GYNT

Give me time and you shall see!

ÅSE

King, we sing, he'll be in time,
So, I think, runs the old rhyme!

PEER GYNT

Mother, wait!

ÅSE

O! stop your chatter
You're as mad as any hatter. —
Ah! and yet there's truth enough —
Something once you might, with trying,
Have achieved, but for your lying
And your dreaming trash and stuff.
Hegstad's girl was fond of you.
Had you only wished to wed her
To the church you could have led her.

PEER GYNT

What?

ÅSE

Her father, old and mumbling,
Can't stop what she wants to do.
In a way he 's obstinate;
But 't is Ingrid, soon or late,
Rules him; 't is the daughter who
Leads the gaffer slowly, grumbling.
(*Beginning to weep again*)
Peer! she's rich beyond reporting —
Lands, entailed! Ah! think, the pity!
If you 'd woo'd, as though it matter'd,
You 'd have been a bridegroom pretty,
You who stand here grimed and tatter'd!

PEER GYNT (*briskly*)

Come then! We will go a-courting!

ÅSE

Where?

PEER GYNT

At Hegstad!

ÅSE

There, poor dear,
Is no way for suitors clear!

PEER GYNT

How is that?

ÅSE

'T is all in vain, dear!
Luck returns not what she spills —

PEER GYNT

Speak, quick!

ÅSE (*sobbing*)

On the Western hills

While in air you hunted reindeer,
Here 's Mads Moën won the heiress!

PEER GYNT

What! That woman's bug-bear! Mads?

ÅSE

Yes; he 's going to wed the lass.

PEER GYNT

Just a moment to find where is,
Horse and cart — (*Going*)

ÅSE

Your trouble spare,
For the wedding is to-morrow —

PEER GYNT

Pooh! this evening I 'll be there!

ÅSE

Shame now! Would you crown our sorrow
With a load of scorn and spite?

PEER GYNT

Nonsense; it will be all right.
(*Shouting and laughing at the same time*)
We 'll not drive. Quick, jump up! There!
'T would take time to fetch the mare —
(*Lifts her in his arms*)

ÅSE

Put me down!

PEER GYNT

Nay, on my arm
I will bear you to the wedding!
(*Wades out into the river*)

ÅSE

Help! God keep us safe from harm!
Peer! We 're drowning.

PEER GYNT

No: I'm heading

For a nobler death!

ÅSE

Aye, true!

Hanging is the fate for you! (*Pulling his hair*)

Oh! you beast! you ——

PEER GYNT

Now, take care.

Here the bottom's smooth and slippery.

ÅSE

Ass!

PEER GYNT

Oh yes! abuse and swear;

None's the worse for that. Now grip! I

Clamber slow as it goes up.

ÅSE

Oh! don't drop me!

PEER GYNT

Hello! Hop!

We will play at Peer and reindeer, —

I'm the reindeer, (*curvetting*) you are I.

ÅSE

Oh! I'm going mad! I'll die!

PEER GYNT

Now we reach the shore again, dear. (*Wades ashore*)

Won't you give the deer a kiss,

Thanks for carrying of you ——

ÅSE (*boxing his ears*)

This

Is my thanks!

PEER GYNT

Ow! Ow! I say
That is miserable pay.

ÅSE

Put me down!

PEER GYNT

To Hegstad first.
Be my spokesman. You're so clever;
Talk to him, the gaffer curst;
Say Mads Moën's useless, never ——

ÅSE

Put me down!

PEER GYNT

And, when all's told,
That Peer Gynt's a lad of gold.

ÅSE

Yes: I'll do that, you may swear!
Fine's the character you'll bear.
I will draw you full and truly
All your devil's-pranks unruly
I will tell them plain and straight ——

PEER GYNT

Oho!

ÅSE (*kicking with rage*)

My tongue shall go on telling
Till the dog's set on you yelling
As a tramp at Hegstad gate!

PEER GYNT

H'm! Then I must go alone.

ÅSE

Yes, but quickly I'll pursue you!

PEER GYNT

You've not strength. The walk will do you ——

ÅSE

Strength? I'm wroth in such a fashion
I could smash the hardest stone!
I could eat flints in my passion!
Put me down!

PEER GYNT

Well, promise, dear ——

ÅSE

Nothing! I will go with you.
They shall have a portrait true!

PEER GYNT

Mother, you just must stop here.

ÅSE

No, I'll go with you, I will.

PEER GYNT

Never!

ÅSE

How can you prevent me?

PEER GYNT

I will perch you on the mill.
(*Puts her up on the roof; Åse screams*)

ÅSE

Let me down.

PEER GYNT

If you'll consent, my ——

ÅSE

Rubbish!

PEER GYNT

Please, now, mother fair ——

ÅSE (*throwing a sod of grass at him*)

Let me down this instant, Peer!

PEER GYNT

If I dared, be sure I would. (*Comes nearer*)

Don't forget, sit still and good;
Do not tug the tiles, nor tear!
Do not sprawl; take care of tripping —
Else you may fare ill, come slipping,
Toppling down.

ÅSE

You utter brute!

PEER GYNT

Do not kick!

ÅSE

Would God you'd shoot
Like a changeling through creation!

PEER GYNT

Oh! tut!

ÅSE

Bah!

PEER GYNT

Give to my wooing
Benison and approbation.
Do!

ÅSE

I'll give you such a beating,
Though you are so big and strong!

PEER GYNT

Well, farewell, though not for long!
Patience, soon will be our meeting.
(*Is going, but turns, holds up his finger warningly
and says*)

Do not sprawl to your undoing! (*Goes out*)

ÅSE

Peer! God help me! Off he's prancing!
Reindeer-rider! Liar! Hi!
Will you listen? No, he's dancing

O'er the meadow! (*Screaming*) Help! I'm dizzy.
[*Two Old Women, with sacks on their backs, come down the path to the mill.*]

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Lord! who's screaming?

ÅSE

It is I!

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Åse! well you are on high!

ÅSE

I'll go higher by and by:
Soon for heaven I shall be busy.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Bless your passing!

ÅSE

Fetch a ladder!

Down I'm coming! That fiend Peer! to —!

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Your son!

ÅSE

He never did a madder
Trick than this, which you can swear to.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

We'll bear witness.

ÅSE

Help me down, then!

And to Hegstad quick I'll fare —

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Is he there?

FIRST OLD WOMAN

You'll get your own, then,
Back, for Aslak Smith goes there.

ÅSE (*wringing her hands*)

Ah! God help me, ere they've done
They will kill my only son!

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Oh! that lot has oft been fear'd;
Cheer up! he must dree his weird.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Is she in her senses still? (*Calls up the hill*)
Here, you two! And any other —

MAN'S VOICE

What's wrong?

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Peer Gynt's percht his mother
On the roof of the old mill!

SCENE TWO

A hillside covered with bushes and heather. The highroad runs behind it; and there is a fence between.

Peer Gynt comes along a path, goes briskly to the fence, stops and looks out over the prospect.

PEER GYNT

Yonder lies Hegstad. Soon I shall win there.
(*Half clammers over the fence; then hesitates*)

Is she, is Ingrid alone and within there?

(*Shades his eyes and looks out*)

No. To the house the guests swarm up the track,
Well, perhaps now it were wisest returning.

(*Draws back his leg*)

Still they titter behind one's back

And whisper, and then through your soul it goes
burning.

(Goes away from the fence a few steps, and plucks leaves absently)

Ah! if I'd only a drop to be drinking ——

Or else, if I could only go unseen. ——

Or else were unknown — but the best thing, I ween,
Is drink, for the jeers then don't set a man shrinking.
(Looks around as though afraid; then hides among the bushes; some Wedding Guests pass on their way to the farm)

A MAN *(conversing)*

His father a drunkard, his mother so weak.

A WOMAN

A wastrel the boy, nor 's the reason to seek.

[The Guests go on. Presently Peer Gynt comes forward. He is flushed with shame, and peers after them.]

PEER GYNT *(softly)*

Was it me they were meaning? *(With a forced shrug)*

Oh! let them chatter!

They can't talk me dead, and what does the rest
matter?

(Throws himself down on the heather; lies on his back with his hands under his head and gazes up into the sky)

What a curious cloud! How like to a mare!

There 's a man on it too — and bridle — and saddle.
And behind an old crone, on a broomstick a-straddle!
(Laughs quietly to himself)

It 's mother. She 's screaming and shrieking: hi,
Peer!

You 're a brute — Ah! now fear stops her holloas. —
(His eyes gradually close)

Peer Gynt rides the first, then a multitude follows.

His horse is with gold and with silver a-shining.
Peer wears a long cloak, with a fine silken lining.
Gauntlets he has and a scabbard and sabre.
Of the riders behind each is fine as his neighbor.
None of them though, for the riding is fitter.
None is like Peer in the sun, all a-glitter.
Down by the fence stand the people, a-cluster,
Lifting their hats, gazing up in a fluster.
Women are curtseying. Every one hails him.
Kaiser Peer Gynt and his troop that ne'er fails him.
Many a sixpence and many a shilling
Throws he, that all may their pockets be filling.
Each richer far than he e'er hoped to be, grows.
Then Peer in his majesty over the sea goes.
Engelland's prince on the shore stands to greet
him.
Engelland's maidens are waiting to meet him,
Engelland's nobles and Engelland's Kaiser;
See Peer at high-table, no king there a wiser;
The Kaiser, with crown off, begins to speak, "I
Sir" —

ASLAK THE SMITH (*to some others who are passing
along the road*)

Look there is Peer Gynt, the drunken swine!

PEER GYNT (*starting half up*)

What? Kaiser!

ASLAK (*leaning over the fence and grinning*)

Get up Peer, bully mine!

PEER GYNT

What the devil! The smith! What d'you want with
me?

ASLAK (*to the others*)

His mind must still run on our Lundë spree.

PEER GYNT (*springing up*)

You 'd better clear out!

ASLAK

I am going, there!

But where do you spring from? Tell us, Peer!

Six weeks away! Was it the hill-trolls' snare?

PEER GYNT

Aslak Smith, the most singular deeds have I done.

ASLAK (*winking to the others*)

Tell us them, Peer!

PEER GYNT

No: never a one.

ASLAK (*after a pause*)

You 're going to Hegstad?

PEER GYNT

No.

ASLAK

They say

There was a time when the girl lookt your way.

PEER GYNT

You smutty crow ——!

ASLAK (*falling back a little*)

Don't be hasty, lad;

Though Ingrid's jilted you, more can be had;

Think, son of John Gynt! Come on to the feast;

Pretty lambs will be there or a widow at least ——

PEER GYNT

To hell ——!

ASLAK

You will surely find one who will marry ——

Good-night, your respects to the bride we'll
carry.

[*They go, laughing and whispering.*]

PEER GYNT (*looks after them for a while, makes a defiant motion and turns half round*)

Ingrid may marry, for all I'm caring,
With whom she will. I'll not envy him!

(*Looks at himself*)

My pants are torn. I'm ragged and grim. —
If now I had something new to be wearing.

(*Stamps on the ground*)

Could I but with a butcher's grip
Pluck out their disdain and far away throw it!

(*Looks round suddenly*)

What was that? Who titter'd, and then tried to
slip —?

I thought I heard some one. No. No one. I know
it. —

I'll go home to mother.

(*Begins to go upwards, but stops again, and listens towards Hegstad*)

Dance music's begun!

(*Gazes and listens; moves downwards slowly; his eyes glisten; he rubs his hands on his thighs*)

Each man has eight partners! the girls so are
swarming!

Ah, galloping death, I must join in the fun! —

But, mother, up on the mill-roof storming —

(*His eyes are drawn towards Hegstad again; he leaps and laughs*)

Hi! o'er the common the barn-dance is flying!

Aye, Guttorm, he *can* make his fiddle give a

Booming and rush, like the spate on a river!

And the girls each with other in loveliness vying! —

Yes, galloping death, I must join in the fun!

(*Leaps over the fence and goes down the road*)

SCENE THREE

The farm-place at Hegstad. At the back the house. A throng of guests. There's lively dancing on the green. The Fiddler sits on the table. The Kitchen-Master stands in the doorway. Cookmaids go to and fro between the buildings. Elderly people sit here and there conversing.

A WOMAN (*goes to a group that is sitting on some logs of wood*)

The bride? Oh! yes, she's crying a little;
But who minds that on the bridal day?

KITCHEN-MASTER (*in another group*)

Fill up now, sirs, and drink deeply! It'll —

A MAN

Thanks! You are good. That's enough, I say!

A LAD (*to the Fiddler, as he flies past, holding a girl by the hand*)

Ha! then Guttorm, don't fiddle charily!

THE GIRL

Scrape, till it sings o'er the meadows merrily!

GIRLS (*in a ring, round a lad dancing*)

There's a brave fling!

A GIRL

His legs are the spryest.

THE LAD (*dancing*)

Here the walls are wide, and the roof of the highest!

BRIDEGROOM (*whimpering, comes up to his Father, who is talking to some other men, and pulls his coat*)

Father, she will not; she is so proud!

HIS FATHER

What will she not?

BRIDEGROOM

She has lockt herself in.

HIS FATHER

Well, find the key and an entrance win.

BRIDEGROOM

I can't.

HIS FATHER

You 're a fool, so easily cow'd!

*(Turns away to the others again; the Bridegroom drifts across the place)*A LAD *(coming from behind the house)*

Girls, here 's the chap to make jest and fun of you!

Peer Gynt ——!

ASLAK *(who has just come up)*

Who asked him?

KITCHEN-MASTER

Not I, nor none of you.

*(Goes to the house)*ASLAK *(to the Girls)*

If he should speak to you, mind a snub throw him.

GIRL *(to the others)*

Yes; we 'll pretend we don't even know him.

PEER GYNT *(comes lively and heated, stops in front of the group, and claps his hands)*

Come along! which is the liveliest one of you?

A GIRL *(as he approaches her)*

I am not.

ANOTHER *(similarly)*

I am not.

A THIRD

No; nor I, thank you.

PEER GYNT *(to a fourth)*

For lack of a better, come out of the rank, you.

THE GIRL

Have n't the time.

PEER GYNT (*to the fifth*)

You?

THE GIRL (*going*)

Homewards I go.

PEER GYNT

To-night! Are you raving, and out of your senses?

ASLAK (*a moment after, in a low voice*)

She's gone with an old man; her answer pretence is.

PEER GYNT (*turns sharply to an elderly man*)

Where are the unbespoke girls!

THE MAN

I don't know. (*Goes away from him*)

[*Peer Gynt has become subdued. He glances shyly and furtively at the group. All look at him; but no one speaks. He approaches other groups. Wherever he comes, there is silence; when he goes, they smile and look after him.*]

PEER GYNT (*softly*)

Glances, and thoughts keen as needles, and smiles.

They grate, as do saw-edges under the files!

(*He slinks along by the fence; Solveig, holding Little Helga by the hand, comes into the farm-place with her Parents*)

A MAN (*to another close to Peer Gynt*)

See here are the new folk!

THE OTHER

From west, afar?

THE MAN

Yes, the people from Hedal.

THE OTHER

So they are.

PEER GYNT (*places himself in front of the new folk, points to Solveig, and asks the man*)

May I dance with your daughter?

THE MAN (*quietly*)

You may do, but first

We must go to the house and greet our hostess.

[*They go on.*]

KITCHEN-MASTER (*to Peer Gynt, offering him a drink*)

As you *have* come, drink deep to whatever the toast is!

PEER GYNT (*looking fixedly at the new comers*)

Thanks. I'd dance sooner. I've not got a thirst.

[*The Kitchen-Master goes away.*]

PEER GYNT (*looks towards the house and laughs*)

How fair! Saw you ever one so sweet?

Looking shy at her shoes! and as they tarried,

She held to her mother's petticoat-pleat,

And a hymn-book wrapt in her kerchief carried!

I must seek her. (*Going into the house*)

A LAD (*coming out with several others*)

Hallo! Hi! Peer, how is this?

You 're leaving?

PEER GYNT

No.

THE LAD

Then you 're heading amiss!

(*Takes him by the shoulders to turn him round*)

PEER GYNT

Let me pass!

THE LAD

Is it Aslak the Smith you 're afraid of?

PEER GYNT

Afraid, I?

THE LAD

At Lundë we saw what you 're made of!

[*The group laugh and go to the dancing-green.*

SOLVEIG (*in the doorway*)

Are you not the lad who was wanting to dance?

PEER GYNT

Of course I am: don't you remember my glance?

(*Takes her hand*)

Come along.

SOLVEIG

Not very far, mother said.

PEER GYNT

Mother said? Mother said! When were you born?

SOLVEIG

You 're laughing ——

PEER GYNT

You 're only a babe, I 'll be sworn!

Are you grown up?

SOLVEIG

Last spring with the vicar I read.

PEER GYNT

Tell me your name, lass, and then we 'll talk lightlier.

SOLVEIG

My name is Solveig. And what call they you?

PEER GYNT

Peer Gynt.

SOLVEIG (*looses her hand*)

Oh! heavens!

PEER GYNT

Why, what would you do?

SOLVEIG

My garter is loose. I must tie it up tightlier.

(*Goes away*)

BRIDEGROOM (*pulling at his mother*)

Mother, she will not —— !

HIS MOTHER

She will not? what?

BRIDEGROOM

She won't, mother!

MOTHER

What?

BRIDEGROOM

Give me the key.

HIS FATHER (*softly and angrily*)

Shove the boy in a stall; he 's not fit to go free!

HIS MOTHER

No, don't scold him. Poor dear, he 'll get over that.
[*They go away.*]

A LAD (*coming with a whole crowd of others from the dancing-green*)

Peer, have some brandy?

PEER GYNT

No.

LAD

Not a drain?

PEER GYNT (*looking darkly at him*)

Have you got any, then?

LAD

What, rather! You spy it?

(*Pulls out a flask and drinks*)

Ah! how it stings me! Well?

PEER GYNT

Let me try it! (*Drinks*)

ANOTHER

Now try mine, Peer, as well.

PEER GYNT

Not I, not again!

ANOTHER

What rot! To stop now were the act of an ass!
Drink, Peer!

PEER GYNT

Well, yes, just a glimpse at the glass.

*(Drinks again)*A GIRL *(half aloud)*

Come, let us go!

PEER GYNT

Are you frightened of me?

THIRD LAD

Who is n't afraid of you!

A FOURTH

Think on that one day

You show'd us what tricks you could do at Lundë!

PEER GYNT

I can do more than that, when once I get free!

FIRST LAD *(whispering)*

He 's getting on now!

SEVERAL *(gathering round him)*

Tell us one of the seven

Great stories ——

PEER GYNT

To-morrow.

OTHERS

No; now, this even!

A GIRL

Can you conjure, Peer?

PEER GYNT

I can raise up the devil!

A MAN

So could my grandmother, ere I was born!

PEER GYNT

Liar! Where I run none can run level!

One day in a nut I put Him with the Horn.

'T was worm-eaten, you see!

SEVERAL (*laughing*)

Of course it was.

PEER GYNT

Then he

Cursed and wept and again and again he

Promised me all ——

ONE OF THE CROWD

But he had to go in?

PEER GYNT

Rather. I stopped up the hole with a pin.

Hi! You should have heard him rumbling and
grumbling.

A GIRL

Only think!

PEER GYNT

It was just like a bumble-bee bumbling.

THE GIRL

Have you got the fiend yet in the nut?

PEER GYNT

Why, nay.

By now the devil has flown on his way.

It is *his* fault, the smith has no love for me.

A LAD

Why?

PEER GYNT

Well, I went to the smith, and: Look here, said I,
Do you mind just giving this nutshell a cracking?

He was willing: put down the nut for a whacking;
But Aslak, you know, is so heavy of hand —
For ever that huge sledge-hammer swinging. —

VOICE (*from the crowd*)

Did he slaughter the devil?

PEER GYNT

He made a fine stand.

But the devil show'd fight: like a fiery brand
Through the roof and the shatter'd wall went winging.

SEVERAL

And the smith? —

PEER GYNT

Stood there with his hands all stinging
And since, the affair in my face has been flinging.
[*All laugh.*]

SOME

The tale was a brave one!

OTHERS

The best he has told!

PEER GYNT

D' you think I invented it?

A MAN

Oh! no,
You are free from that charge; I heard it of old
From granddad —

PEER GYNT

You liar! I did it, just so!

THE MAN

Like ev'rything else.

PEER GYNT (*with a fling*)

Ho! I can ride
Right through the air on a horse of gold!

And many 's the thing I can do beside.

[*A roar of laughter.*]

ONE OF THE CROWD

Ride through the air a bit!

MANY

Yes, dear Peer Gynt ——

PEER GYNT

Spare your vehement pray'rs: to them all I am flint.

I will ride like a hurricane over the crowd of you!

All shall fall at my feet, yea the most proud of you!

AN ELDERLY MAN

Now he is frantic.

ANOTHER

Insolent!

A THIRD

Ass!

A FOURTH

Liar!

PEER GYNT (*threatening them*)

You wait and I'll bring things to pass ——

MAN (*half-tipsy*)

Ay, wait; such a pass and a jolly surprise!

Your coat dusted!

OTHERS

Back bruised, and bunged-up eyes!

[*The crowd disperses, the elder men angry, the younger laughing and jeering.*]

BRIDEGROOM (*close to house*)

Peer, is it true you can ride through the air?

PEER GYNT (*curtly*)

Quite true, Mads. I am a rare and a game one.

BRIDEGROOM

Have you got the invisible cloak? Is it there?

PEER GYNT

The hat do you mean? Yes, I have that same one.
(*Turns away from him; Solveig crosses the yard, holding Helga by the hand*)

PEER GYNT (*goes up to them, a light in his eyes*)

Solveig! How good! You *have* come again, dear!
(*Takes hold of her wrist*)

Now I will whirl you gaily with me!

SOLVEIG

Let me go!

PEER GYNT

Why?

SOLVEIG

You are too free!

PEER GYNT

When summer is dawning, then free is the reindeer!
Come with me, lass: now don't be curst!

SOLVEIG (*looses her arm*)

I dare not.

PEER GYNT

Why not?

SOLVEIG

You have been drinking.

(*Goes away with Helga*)

PEER GYNT

Ah! if I were only my knife-blade sinking
Right in the heart of them — best and worst!

BRIDEGROOM (*nudging him with his elbow*)

Cannot you help me to get at the bride?

PEER GYNT (*absently*)

The bride? Where is she?

BRIDEGROOM

In the storehouse.

PEER GYNT

O!

BRIDEGROOM

Peer, you might try to get at her!

PEER GYNT

No,

You won't have my help to get inside.

(A thought comes to him: he says softly and sharply)

Ingrid! The storehouse!

(Goes up to Solveig)

Will you still leave me?

(Solveig tries to go: he stands in her way)

You're ashamed to be seen with a tramp like Peer.

SOLVEIG *(hastily)*

You're not like a tramp in the least, not a bit!

PEER GYNT

Yes; and I've had just a drop too: but it

Was only for spite, to spite you who would grieve me.

Come then!

SOLVEIG

Ev'n if I wisht to, I dare not!

PEER GYNT

Whom do you fear?

SOLVEIG

My father.

PEER GYNT

I see.

Father? I know. He's one of the "swear-not,"

"Touch-not," godly crew? What? Answer me!

SOLVEIG

How shall I answer?

PEER GYNT

At church he ne'er misses?

And your mother and you at your pray'rs don't
cease?

Pious ones? Answer!

SOLVEIG

Let me go in peace.

PEER GYNT

No!

(Drops his voice, and says sharply and terrifyingly)

I can change myself into a troll!

I'll come when, at midnight, the church-clocks toll.

If you should hear something that spits and hisses,

Don't fancy it's only the cat or the kitten!

That is I, girl. I'll drain off your blood in
a cup,

And your little sister, I'll eat her right up.

Aye, and over the back and the loins you'll be
bitten;

For at night I'm a were-wolf and ravage men.

*(Suddenly changes his tone, and begs, as in anguish
and dread)*

Dance, Solveig!

SOLVEIG *(looking darkly at him)*

You were horrible then.

(She goes into the house)

BRIDEGROOM *(sidling up again)*

You shall have an ox, if you'll help me!

PEER GYNT

Come!

*[They go out at the back of the house. At the same
time there come forward a crowd of men from the
dancing-green, most of them drunk. Noise and hub-
bub. Solveig, Helga, and their Parents stand among
elderly people in the doorway.]*

KITCHEN-MASTER (*to Aslak, who is foremost of the crowd*)

Keep the peace!

ASLAK (*pulling off his jacket*)

No; here is the ring of doom.

Peer Gynt or Aslak must have a fall.

SOME

Yes, let them fight!

OTHERS

Let them wrangle; not maul!

ASLAK

Fists must decide; it's that way, no other.

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

Control yourself!

HELGA

Will they beat him, mother?

A LAD

Let us rather go taunt him with all his lies.

ANOTHER

Throw him out of the feasting!

A THIRD

Spit in his eyes!

A FOURTH (*to Aslak*)

Don't give in now, smith!

ASLAK (*casting away his jacket*)

The ass must to the slaughter!

SOLVEIG'S MOTHER (*to Solveig*)

Now you see what they think of that windbag,
daughter!

ÅSE (*comes up with a stick in her hand*)

Is that son of mine here? Oh! he's in for a drubbing!
Oh! how heartily I will dang the beast!

ASLAK (*rolling up his shirt-sleeves*)

Pooh! that would but give him a gentle rubbing.

SOME

The smith will dang him!

OTHERS

Bang the beast!

ASLAK (*spits on his hands and nods to Åse*)

Hang the beast!

ÅSE

What say? Hang my Peer? Oh! try if you dare!

Åse has teeth and claws that can tear.

Where is he? (*Calls across the yard*)

Peer!

BRIDEGROOM (*runs up*)

Oh! God's death on the tree!

Come father, mother, and ——

THE FATHER

What is wrong now?

BRIDEGROOM

Think, Peer Gynt ——!

ÅSE (*screams*)

Have you taken my boy from me?

BRIDEGROOM

No, Peer Gynt ——! See on the hill's brow ——!

MANY

With the bride!

ÅSE (*lets her stick fall*)

O! you beast!

ASLAK (*as though thunderstruck*)

See the precipice drop there!

He's climbing up, my God, like a kid!

BRIDEGROOM (*crying*)

He shoulder'd her like I do a pig, mother; he did!

ÅSE (*shaking her fist up at him*)

O! would you might fall! (*Screams in terror*)

Tread with care on the top there!

INGRID'S FATHER (*comes on, bareheaded, white with rage*)

I'll have your life for this bride-rape yet! You ——!

ÅSE

O! no! God punish me if I let you!

END OF FIRST ACT

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE ONE

A narrow mountain path, high up. It is early morning. Peer Gynt comes hastily and sullenly along the path. Ingrid, with some of her bridal trappings on, tries to hold him back.

PEER GYNT

Go!

INGRID (*weeping*)

Like this? What are you saying?

Whither?

PEER GYNT

Where you will for me.

INGRID (*wringing her hands*)

False one!

PEER GYNT

Useless tears and praying!

Each must go his own way, free!

INGRID

Sin — and sin will reunite us!

PEER GYNT

Devil take the thoughts that bite us!

Devil take all girls that spite us —

All save one ——!

INGRID

And who is she, dear?

PEER GYNT

'T is not you!

INGRID

Who is it, pray?

PEER GYNT

Go! Go off the self-same way!

To your father!

INGRID

This to me, dear ——!

PEER GYNT

Peace!

INGRID

You can't want this to be, dear;

What you 're saying.

PEER GYNT

Can and do.

INGRID

First to lure and then forsake me!

PEER GYNT

Well, what offer can you make me?

INGRID

Hegstad Farm and more 's for you.

PEER GYNT

Where 's your hymn-book? Does your hair

Swim, like gold, o'er neck and throat;

Look you shyly anywhere?

Hold your mother's petticoat?

Speak!

INGRID

No; but ——

PEER GYNT

Then with the Vicar

Read you this last spring?

INGRID

No; my ——

PEER GYNT

Are you bashful in your glances.
When I ask, can you deny?

INGRID

Heav'ns! 't is one of his mad trances —— !

PEER GYNT

Does your presence sanctify?
Speak!

INGRID

No ——

PEER GYNT

Then, why all this bicker? (*Going*)

INGRID (*stands in his way*)

Know! you will, if you forsake me,
Suffer.

PEER GYNT

I don't care a pin.

INGRID

You may goods and honor win
If you 'll have me.

PEER GYNT

They won't make me.

INGRID (*bursting into tears*)

Oh, you lured me!

PEER GYNT

You were willing.

INGRID

I was desperate!

PEER GYNT

Frantic I.

INGRID (*threateningly*)

Oh! the price you 'll pay is high!

PEER GYNT

Glad I'd pay ten thousand shilling.

INGRID

Is your purpose set?

PEER GYNT

Like stone.

INGRID

Good! The equal fates invite us! (*Goes downwards*)

PEER GYNT (*is silent for a moment; then cries*)

Devil take all thoughts that bite us!

Devil take all girls that spite us!

INGRID (*turning her head, and calling mockingly upwards*)

All save one!

PEER GYNT

Yes; all save one!

[*They go; each a different way.*]

SCENE TWO

Near a mountain-tarn; the ground near is soft and marshy. Åse, in despair, is calling and looking round her on all sides. Solveig keeps up with her only with difficulty. Solveig's Father and Mother, and Helga are some way behind.

ÅSE (*tossing her arms and tearing her hair*)

With awesome terrors all things try to beat me!

Heav'n, waters, the hills are one to defeat me!

The mists from the heav'ns roll down to entrap him!

The treacherous waters in wan death will wrap him!

And the hills, with landslips, will crush him to powder;

And the people cry loud for his blood, and louder!

God! they shan't have it! I can't live apart from him!

The oaf! That the fiend should thus steal his heart from him!

(Turns to Solveig)

Now is n't this all past belief, beyond flying?

He, whose whole life was romancing and lying;

He, who was strong — to chatter and shirk;

He, who never once did a bit of real work:

He — Oh, a body could both laugh and cry! —

In pain and in need we clung close, he and I.

Yes; you must know that my man used to drink,

Around the parish for gossip would slink,

Wasted and threw to the winds all our stuff.

And meanwhile sat Peerkin and I, all day.

The best thing was to keep memory away;

To bear up under all I've found hard enough.

It's a horrible thing to look fate in the eyes;

And of course one would gladly try and shake sorrow off,

And do all one can to keep thoughts of to-morrow off.

Some take to brandy and some take to lies;

And we — well, we took to fairy-tales

Of princes and trolls and grim beasts with scales.

And of bride-rape as well. But who could have said

That those tales of the fiend would stick in his head?

(Terrified again)

Hu! what a shriek! It's a nixie or bogie!

Peer! Peer! — On that hillock! the rogue, he ——!

(Runs to the top of a little rise, and looks over the tarn; Solveig's Parents come up)

Not a sign!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER (*quietly*)

It is worst for him, your boy.

ÅSE (*weeping*)

Ah! my lost lamb! my Peer! my joy!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER (*nods mildly*)

Verily lost.

ÅSE

No, no; he's too clever!

Don't tell me. You'll not meet his equal — never!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

You foolish woman!

ÅSE

Oh! yes, quite, quite;

I am foolish; but the boy's all right!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER (*still softly and with mild eyes*)

His soul is lost; his heart has been harden'd.

ÅSE (*in anguish*)

No! Our Lord is kind and Peer'll be pardon'd!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER.

Think you he can feel for his sinfulness sorrow?

ÅSE (*eagerly*)

No; but he'll ride through the heavens to-morrow!

SOLVEIG'S MOTHER

Lord! are you mad?

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

What do you mean, dame?

ÅSE

No deed's too hard for him. No game

Too risky, you'll see, if he only lives long enough——

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

Best if you saw him on a gallows strong enough.

ÅSE (*shrieks*)

O! Cross of Christ!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

Neath the terrible sentence

It might be his heart would be turn'd to repentance.

ÅSE (*bewildered*)

O! all this will send me senseless in time!

We must find him!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

To save his soul.

ÅSE

And his skin!

We must dredge the swamps, for fear he's fall'n in!

And if he's troll-taken, the church bells must chime.

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

Hm! — here's a cattle-path —

ÅSE

God, who is just,

Repay you!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

I do but what Christians must.

ÅSE

Fie! The rest then are heathen! who would not
search

But, when we set out, left us all in the lurch.

SOLVEIG'S FATHER.

They all knew him too well.

ÅSE

He was better than they!

(*Wrings her hands*)

And think — and think, may be killed to-day!

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

Here are tracks of a man!

ÅSE

'T is here we must go.

SOLVEIG'S FATHER

Round this side of the farm we will scatter, so.

(He and his wife go on)

SOLVEIG *(to Åse)*

Go on! Tell me more!

ÅSE *(wiping her eyes)*

Of my son, you mean?

SOLVEIG

Yes.

Tell all!

ÅSE *(smiles and tosses her head)*

All? Soon you 'd tire, I guess!

SOLVEIG

Sooner by far in telling you 'll tire

Than will my desire.

SCENE THREE

Low, treeless heights under the mountain-moorland; peaks afar off. The shadows are long; it is late in the day.

Peer Gynt comes running at full speed, and stops on the hillside.

PEER GYNT

All the parish is after me quick!

Every man of them arm'd with a gun or a stick.

In front I can hear the old Hegstad churl howling,

Every one knows that Peer Gynt's out and prowling. —

This is different far from a bout, smith with Peer!

This is life! In each limb one is strong as a bear.

(Strikes out and springs up in the air)

To crush, overturn! Stem the rush of the river!

To beat! Tear up firs, till the lowest roots quiver!
This is life! This both hardens and lifts one higher!
To hell with the savorless tales of the liar!

THREE FARM GIRLS (*rush across the hillside screaming and singing*)

Trolls! Bård and Kârë! Hear the alarms, dears!
Troll-pack! Will you slumber to-night in our arms,
dears?

PEER GYNT

Whom call you?

FARM GIRLS

The trolls of the night! Of the night!

FIRST GIRL

Trond, come with kindness!

SECOND GIRL

Bård, come with might!

THIRD GIRL

In our saeter the cots are empty and cry for us!

FIRST GIRL

Might is kindness!

SECOND GIRL

And kindness is might!

THIRD GIRL

Lacking lads, we must play with the trolls of the
night!

PEER GYNT

Why, where are the lads, then?

THE THREE (*with a horse-laugh*)

They may not come nigh for us!

FIRST GIRL

Mine call'd me his sweetheart, his darling, his life,
Now he 's taken a grey-headed widow to wife.

SECOND GIRL

Mine met a gipsy-lass up the far North.

Now as gipsies they tramp the land back and forth.

THIRD GIRL

Mine kill'd the brat that was born of our sin.

And now his head 's stuck on a stake, all a-grin.

THE THREE

Trolls of the Valfield! Hear the alarms, dears!

Troll-pack! Will you slumber to-night in our arms,
dears?

PEER GYNT (*stands, with a leap, in the midst of them*)

I'm a troll with three heads, and for three girls a
lover!

THE GIRLS

Are you such a lad, eh?

PEER GYNT

You yourselves may discover!

FIRST GIRL

To the hut!

SECOND GIRL

We have barrels of mead!

PEER GYNT

They shall dry for us!

THIRD GIRL

This night then shall no cot be empty, nor cry for us!

SECOND GIRL (*kissing him*)

Like white-heated iron he glistens and sparkles.

THIRD GIRL (*doing the same*)

Like a baby's eyes where the tarn deepest darkles.

PEER GYNT (*dancing in the midst*)

Heavy of heart, and wanton of thought;

A smile in the eyes, in the throat a sob caught!

THE GIRLS (*making long noses towards the mountain-tops, screaming and singing*)

Trond, Bård and Kårë! Here are our charms, dears!
Troll-pack! Who'll slumber to-night in our arms,
dears?

[*They dance away over the heights, with Peer Gynt in the midst.*]

SCENE FOUR

Among the Rondë mountains. Sunset. Shining snow-peaks all round.

PEER GYNT (*enters, dizzy and bewildered*)

Tower over tower is growing!
See the gate glitter and sway!
Stand! Will you stand? It's flowing
Further and further away!
The cock on the wind-vane lifts his
Wings for a heavenly flight;
Deeper the blue in the rifts is,
Barr'd are the hills and closed tight. —
What's there? Trees and trunks many-rooted
That spring from a rent in the ground?
They are warriors heron-footed!
Now they fade, not a sign of them's found.
Like rainbow streamers, a singing
Shoots through my soul and sight.
What's that far-off chiming and ringing
That weighs on my forehead so tight?
It beats on my brows as a bell, as
A red-hot ring of lead.
I cannot think, who in hell has
Fastened it round my head! (*Sinks down*)

Over the Gendin-edge flying.
Stuff and curst lies! Up the height,
The dizziest, with the bride crying —
And drunk for a day and a night;
Hawks and falcons have chased me,
Threaten'd by trolls and their spies;
Crazy girls have embraced me —
Stuff and accursed lies! (*Gazes long upwards*)
There two brown eagles are flying.
Southward are winging the geese.
While I am stumbling and lying
In the muck and the mess to the knees! (*Springs up*)
I will fly! I will wash myself white in
The bath of the swift-flying wind!
I'll fly high! I will plunge myself bright in
The font of the souls that have sinn'd!
I will soar far above farm-lasses;
I will ride myself clean of mind;
I will cross the salt sea-passes
Over Engelland's prince and his kind;
Yes, girls, you may well be staring;
My ride is for none of you;
You are wasting your time by caring —!
Yet, perhaps, I will stoop down too.
The two brown eagles? Where are they?
They've vanisht, the devil knows where! —
The gable peaks there, by that star! They
Are soaring up everywhere!
Lo! out of the ruins it rises!
Wide see the gateway stands!
I know it! What greets my eyes is
Th' ancestral farm-house grand!
The old fence has gone, and the litter

Of clouts from the windows has gone.
Each casement with lights is a-glitter;
To-night there's a great feast on!
Hark! there is the parson halloing
As his knife on his tumbler he hits;
There's the captain his bottle throwing
And smashing the mirror to bits. —
Peace, mother! Now, no complaining!
Let them waste and squander for me!
'T is the rich John Gynt entertaining;
Hurrah for the family!
What is all this row and racket?
Why do they cry and call?
Who is the boy in the jacket
The parson bids into the hall?
Go in, Peer Gynt, to the judging
It rings forth in song and shout!
Great were thy sires; spite o' grudging
Fate, bring thy greatness about!
(*Leaps forward, runs against a rock; falls and re-
mains stretched on the ground*)

SCENE FIVE

A hillside, with great, soughing trees. Stars shine through the leaves; birds sing in the tree-tops.

A Green-Clad Woman is crossing the hillside. Peer Gynt follows making all kinds of lover-like antics.

GREEN-CLAD ONE (*stops and turns round*)

Is it true?

PEER GYNT (*drawing his finger across his throat*)

As true as my name is Peer;

As true as that you have a beautiful bloom!

Will you have me? You 'll see how I 'll love you and spare;

You shan't turn the spindle nor work at the loom.
You shall eat all you want, till you 're ready to burst.
I never will drag you about by the hair ——

GREEN-CLAD ONE

Nor beat me?

PEER GYNT

Now if I do, may I be curst!

We king's sons, we never beat women, you see.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

You 're a king's son?

PEER GYNT

Yes.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

I 'm the Dovrë-King's daughter.

PEER GYNT

Are you? See then, how you 're fitted for me!

GREEN-CLAD ONE

In the Rondë our palace looms large by the water.

PEER GYNT

My mother's is larger, you have to agree.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

Know you my father? His name is King Bröse.

PEER GYNT

Know you my mother? Her name is Queen Åse.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

When my father is angry, the mountains are
shatter'd.

PEER GYNT

When my mother scolds, they reel and are scatter'd.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

My father can kick to the loftiest arches.

PEER GYNT

Through the torrent my mother magnificent marches.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

Have you got other clothes than those tatter'd rags,
Peer?

PEER GYNT

Ho! you should just see my Sunday raiment!

GREEN-CLAD ONE

Gold and silk are my dresses for every day meant.

PEER GYNT

It looks as if sticks and straw were your wear.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

Yes, there is one thing, please, don't forget; don't;
And that is the Rondë-folks' use and wont:

A two-fold form has our every belonging.

And when you come to my father's hall

It may happen suspicions will on you be thronging
That the place is a dreary moraine, and that 's all.

PEER GYNT

Why, of us precisely the same tale is told!

Rubbish and trash you may think our gold.

And each pane that a glitt'ring reflection throws

You may fancy a bundle of clouts and hose.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

Foul it seems fair, and black it seems white.

PEER GYNT

Big it seems small, and filthy seems bright!

GREEN-CLAD ONE (*falls on his neck*)

Ay, Peer, now I see, how amazingly we fit!

PEER GYNT

As the comb fits the hair, as the breeches the knee fit.

GREEN-CLAD ONE (*calls away over the hillside*)

Bridal-steed! Bridal-steed! Come, my steed, come!

[A gigantic pig comes running in with a rope's end for bridle and an old sack for saddle. Peer Gynt vaults on its back and puts the Green-Clad One in front of him.]

PEER GYNT

Halloo! then, magnificent gallop we home!

Gee-up! Gee-up! my courser fine!

GREEN-CLAD ONE (*tenderly*)

Ah! of late 't was my wont to be pensive and pine —

Folk never can tell what the fates will throw them!

PEER GYNT (*thrashing the pig and trotting off*)

The great! By their riding-gear men know them!

SCENE SIX

The Royal Hall of the Old Man of the Dovrë. There are many Troll Courtiers, Gnomes and Brownies. The Old Man of the Dovrë is enthroned with his sceptre in his hand. His children and nearest relatives are beside him. Peer Gynt stands before him. A violent uproar in the hall.

TROLL COURTIERS

Beat him! The Christian has infatuated

The Dovrë-King's loveliest daughter!

A TROLL IMP

May I hack him on the fingers?

ANOTHER

May I pluck hair from his hated

Head?

A TROLL GIRL

May his thighs by me be bitten and grated?

A TROLL WITCH (*with a ladle*)

May I flay him and pop him in boiling water?

ANOTHER (*with a chopper*)

Shall he roast on the spit? In the pot get a
browning?

OLD MAN OF THE DOVRË

Cool your blood! (*Beckons his councillors close*)

An end to bragging and frowning!

We've been going backwards in this latter day,
Nor know what will stand and what's falling away.
When we get a recruit, there's no sense in downing
And shoving him off; besides our whole town in
There's no stronger chap if you take me as guide.
It is true he has only a single head,
But my daughter herself has no more, beside
Three-headed trolls are of a fashion dead;
One rarely meets two-headers now, my sons,
And those even are but indifferent ones.

(*To Peer Gynt*)

It's my daughter you want me, then, to be giving?

PEER GYNT

Your daughter and realm for dowry; yes.

OLD MAN OF DOVRË

The half is yours, as long as I'm living,
And the other half, when I depart life's stress.

PEER GYNT

I'm content with that.

OLD MAN

Too quickly spoken.

You've a few promises, now, to give.

Break but one of them, our pact's broken.

And you'll never get out of here alive.

First of all you must swear that you'll pay no
heed to

What's beyond the Rondë, the roads that lead to

The world without: Day, Deeds, Light you must shun.

PEER GYNT

Only call me King, and that 's easily done.

OLD MAN

And next — well, your wits to the test I 'll put.
(*Draws himself up in his seat*)

OLDEST TOLL COURTIER (*to Peer Gynt*)

Let 's see if you 've got a wisdom tooth
That can crack the Dovrë-King's riddle-nut.

OLD MAN

How do men differ from trolls?

PEER GYNT

In truth

They don't differ at all, as it seems to me.

Big trolls would roast you, and small trolls would scratch you,

'T were like that with us, if men dared and could catch you.

OLD MAN

True enough. In that and in more we agree.

Yet even is even and morning is morning,

There is a difference, set for a warning,

What the difference is 'twixt our and your ways, I

Will tell you. Out there 'neath the glittering span

O' the sky, goes the saying, "Be thyself, man!"

While here, among us, among all the troll-herd,

"Troll to thyself be — enough!" is the word.

OLDEST TROLL COURTIER (*to Peer Gynt*)

Do you fathom the depth?

PEER GYNT

It strikes me as hazy.

OLD MAN

Let "Enough," the sundering word, be written
In your mind, and on your escutcheon smitten.

PEER GYNT (*scratching himself behind the ears*)

Well, but ——

OLD MAN

It *must*, if here you would lord it!

PEER GYNT

All right; let it go: I think I can afford it ——

OLD MAN

Then next you must learn true value to give
To the homely and every-day way we live.
(*He beckons; two Trolls with pigs'-heads, white
night-caps and so forth, bring in food and drink*)
The cow gives cakes and the bullock mead;
Whether sweet or sour you must not heed;
The great point is, which must not be forgot,
It's home-brew'd, here, on the spot.

PEER GYNT (*pushing the things away*)

May your home-brew'd drink help hell to blaze!
I shall never get used to this country's ways.

OLD MAN

You get the bowl too, made of gold that won't perish,
Who has the gold bowl, him my daughter will cherish.

PEER GYNT (*meditating*)

It is written: Coerce the natural creature;
And, perhaps, in time the drink will seem sweeter.
Let it go! (*Complies*)

OLD MAN

That's a wise word! You spit?

PEER GYNT

I must trust to the force of habit for it.

OLD MAN

And next you throw off your Christian dress,
For in this is the pride of the Dovrë, confess:
Here all things are mountain-made, nought's from
the dale

Except the silk bow at the end of your tail.

PEER GYNT (*indignant*)

I've no tail!

OLD MAN

You must get one, of course, like the rest.

Lord Chamberlain, tie on him my Sunday-best.

PEER GYNT

No: I'm damned. I will not look a fool, do you
hear?

OLD MAN

None woos my child save with a tail at his rear.

PEER GYNT

Turn a man to a beast!

OLD MAN

Nay, my son, you mistake;

Of you only a mannerly wooer I'd make.

Now here's a fine tail, with an orange bow on
her.

And to let you wear that is a very great honor.

PEER GYNT (*reflectively*)

They say, Man is a mote and Life is a bubble.

And to follow the use and wont saves trouble.

Tie away!

OLD MAN

You're a pliable fellow, at least.

TROLL COURTIER

Just try with what grace you can swing it and
wag it!

PEER GYNT (*angrily*)

Ha! would you have me yet further drag it?
Must I give up Christianity?

OLD MAN

No; in quietness you may a Christian be.
On faith there's no duty, but free it comes in:
You must tell a troll by his looks and his skin.
There's our manners and dress, only put on them,
You may hold as your faith what we curse and
condemn.

PEER GYNT

Spite of your terms, you are reasonabler
Than I fear'd you would be when we first got ac-
quainted.

OLD MAN

My son, we trolls are n't so black as we're painted.
Here again do we differ from mankind. — There,
We need not discuss grave affairs any more;
Now joy for the eyes and the ears we will bring out.
Music-maid, forth! Let the Dovrë harp ring out!
Dancing-maid, forth! Tread the Dovrë-hall's floor!
[*Music and dance.*]

TROLL COURTIER

How like you it?

PEER GYNT

Like it, h'm!

OLD MAN

Speak without fear.

What see you?

PEER GYNT

'T is monstrously grim and queer.
A bell-cow with her hoof on gut-strings a-playing.
A sow in socks tripping in tune and swaying.

COURTIERS

Eat him!

OLD MAN

Bear in mind he has but human senses!

TROLL MAIDENS

Let me tear off an ear, let me pluck out an eye!

GREEN-CLAD ONE (*weeping*)

Hu-hu! And we must bear this, my sisters and I,
Our singing and dancing a loathsome offence is!

PEER GYNT

Oho! was it you? Well, a jest at the revel,
You know, is never unkindly meant.

GREEN-CLAD ONE

Can you swear 't was a joke?

PEER GYNT

May I go to the devil

If the dance and the music were n't harmony blent.

OLD MAN

Well now, human nature's a curious thing;
It sticks so long and it sticks so tightly.
If, in conflict with us, it is wounded slightly
Or badly, it heals, though the scar may sting.
My son-in-law's pliable, free from malice.
Willingly his Christian trousers he dropt,
Willingly he drank the mead from our chalice,
Willingly was persuaded a tail to adopt —
So willing, in short, in all things we found him
That I myself thought, the old Adam that bound him
Had been kickt out of doors with a final dismissal —
When hey! he is back again, ere one can whistle.
Yes, yes, my good son-in-law, it is sure
For your human nature we must find a cure.

PEER GYNT

What will you do?

OLD MAN

In your left eye I'll make
A slight scratch until you have crooked sight;
But all that you can see will seem brave and bright.
And then your right window-pane I must break.

PEER GYNT

Are you drunk?

OLD MAN (*lays many sharp instruments on the table*)

Here's many a useful tool.
Blinkers you will wear as a raging bull.
Then you'll know that your bride is beautiful —
And your vision will not be plagued, as just now,
By an old bell-cow and a dancing sow —

PEER GYNT

This is madman's talk!

OLDEST TROLL COURTIER

'T is the King who advises.

'T is you who are mad and he who wise is!

OLD MAN

Just think how in the long future years
You'll be saved the annoyance and trouble of tears!
For remember 't is from the fount of vision
The bitter and marring waters spout.

PEER GYNT

True enough: and the sermon book says with pre-
cision

If thine eye offend thee pluck it out.
But when shall I get back the sight of men,
Heal'd and recover'd?

OLD MAN

Son, never again.

PEER GYNT

Indeed! Then the bargain is off! Good-bye!

OLD MAN

What would you without?

PEER GYNT

Go on my way, I.

OLD MAN

No, stop! To slip in is no difficult thing!

But outwards the Dovrë-gates will not swing.

PEER GYNT

Surely you would not detain me by force?

OLD MAN

Be sensible now, and listen Prince Peer!

You have talents for trolldom. You give quite a fair
Copy of a proper and troll-like course.

And you 'd fain be a troll?

PEER GYNT

I would; when I get

A bride, and a well-managed realm in addition —

I can lose a good deal for such a position.

But to all things on earth is due limit set.

I accept the tail, it can't be denied;

But I can undo what the Chamberlain tied;

My breeches I've dropt; they were old, full of
patches,

I can don them again and fasten the latches.

And easily too I should be able

From your Dovrëfied life to slip the cable.

That a cow is a maid, I am willing to swear;

An oath one can always eat and be free again —

But 't is *that*, just to know one can never be again

Oneself, nor can die like a man, but must wear

The garb of a hill-troll for ever and ever —

And, withal to feel one can turn back, never,
As 't is writ: *that* 's what you are hoping for me too,
And that is a thing I can never agree to.

OLD MAN

Very soon in truth, by my royal life, I 'll
Get angry; and that, you 'll find is no trifle.
You treacherous hound! Do you argue with me?
First with my daughter you make too free —

PEER GYNT

There you lie in your teeth!

OLD MAN

And now marry you must.

PEER GYNT

Dare you accuse me —?

OLD MAN

What? Did n't you lust

In your heart, and desire her your leman to be?

PEER GYNT (*with a snort*)

Desire? Who the devil cares twopence for it?

OLD MAN

You humankind have not alter'd a bit.

You 're ready to prate of the spirit and kneel for it;
But nought counts, if you can't with your hands
touch and feel for it.

So you think, do you, lust matters nothing? You 'll
see;

Just wait; oh, you soon shall see with your eyes —

PEER GYNT

You don't catch me with a bait of lies!

GREEN-CLAD ONE

Ere the year 's out, my Peer, you a father will be.

PEER GYNT

Open doors! I will go.

OLD MAN

In a buck-skin, Prince Peer,
You shall have the imp after you.

PEER GYNT (*wiping off the sweat*)

Would I might waken!

OLD MAN

At the palace you 'd like him?

PEER GYNT

Bah! let him be taken

To the workhouse!

OLD MAN

Well, Prince, that 's your own affair.
But one thing is certain, what 's done is done;
He 'll shoot up, too, in a rapid fashion,
These mongrels grow almost before they 've begun —

PEER GYNT

Old man, don't act like an ox in a passion;
Hear reason, girl! Come to a compromise.
I'm not rich nor a prince. Now you know, be
wise:

For whether you take or the measure or weight of
me,

You 'll gain nothing by keeping and making a mate
of me.

[*The Green-Clad One is taken ill, and is carried by
the Troll Maids.*]

OLD MAN (*looks at him for a while in supreme disdain;
then says*)

On the rock-walls, children, dash him flat.

TROLL IMPS

First let 's play eagle and owl! Or we might
Have the wolf-game, or grey-mouse and glow-eyed
cat!

OLD MAN

Yes, but quick. I'm annoyed and sleepy. Good night!

(Goes)

PEER GYNT *(hunted by the Troll Imps)*

Let me be, devil's imps! *(Tries to bolt up the chimney)*

TROLL IMPS

Come nixies! Come brownies!

Bite him behind!

PEER GYNT

Au!

(Tries to go down thro' the cellar trap-door)

TROLL IMP

There a way down is!

Stop all holes!

TROLL COURTIER

They're enjoying themselves!

PEER GYNT *(struggling with a little imp, that has bit itself fast in his ear)*

Beast, let go.

TROLL COURTIER

Gently, you scamp, with a king's son! So.

(Hits him over the fingers)

PEER GYNT

A rat hole! *(Runs to it)*

TROLL IMP

Brother, run to it quickly and bar!

PEER GYNT

The old one was bad, but the young are worse far!

TROLL IMP

Slash him!

PEER GYNT

Ah! would I were small as a mouse! (*Rushes around*)

TROLL IMPS (*swarming round*)

Shut him in! Brothers!

PEER GYNT (*weeping*)

Would I were a louse. (*He falls*)

TROLL IMPS

Now into his eyes!

PEER GYNT (*buried in a heap of imps*)

Help, mother, I die!

[*Church bells sound afar off.*]

TROLL IMP

Bells in the hills! The cows of the Black Frock are nigh!

[*The Trolls flee, with an uproar of yelling and shrieking. The hall collapses; all disappears.*]

SCENE SEVEN

Pitch darkness.

Peer Gynt is heard beating and slashing about him with a large bough.

PEER GYNT

Answer! Who are you?

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

Myself.

PEER GYNT

Clear out!

VOICE

The hill's big enough, Peer; go roundabout!

PEER GYNT (*tries to get through another place, but strikes against something*)

Who are you?

VOICE

Myself. Can you say the same?

PEER GYNT

I say what I will; my sword flashes like flame!

Have at you! There! There the blow has bitten!

Hundreds King Saul, thousands Peer Gynt has smitten!

(*Beating and slashing*)

Who are you?

VOICE

Myself.

PEER GYNT

That's an answer which

You may keep, for it leaves things as black as pitch.

What are you?

VOICE

The great Boyg.

PEER GYNT

The great Boyg, you say;

The riddle was black, now I think it is grey.

Clear out, then, Boyg!

VOICE

Go roundabout, Peer!

PEER GYNT

Right through! (*Beats and slashes*)

He is down!

(*Tries to go on, but strikes against something*)

Hallo! there's more there!

VOICE

The Boyg, Peer Gynt! The one only one,

'T is the Boyg that 's untired, and the Boyg that is done.

'T is the Boyg that is dead, and the Boyg that 's alive still.

PEER GYNT (*throws away the bough*)

My sword is bewicht; with my fists I 'll arrive still.
(*Struggles to get through*)

VOICE

Yes: rely on your fists, on your body rely.

He-he, Peer Gynt, so you will clamber on high.

PEER GYNT (*falls back again*)

Backwards and forwards, 't is just as long;

In and out, and it 's strait as strong!

He is there. And there. And he 's round the bend.

I am out, and then back in this ring without end.

Name yourself! Let me see you! What are you?
Speak!

VOICE

The Boyg.

PEER GYNT (*groping around*)

Not dead, not living; slimy and sleek;

Misty. Not even a form! It 's as bad as keeping

Up a fight among bears, a-snarl and half sleeping!

(*Screams*)

Strike back at me!

VOICE

The Boyg 's not mad, Peer.

PEER GYNT

Strike!

VOICE

The Boyg strikes not.

PEER GYNT

You shall struggle, I swear!

VOICE

The great Boyg wins without struggle or stress.

PEER GYNT

Were there only a nixie here, that could prick me!

Were a troll here, aged only a year and a night!

Only something to fight with. Nought's here ev'n to
kick me.

He's snoring! Boyg!

VOICE

Yes?

PEER GYNT

Use force, and fight!

VOICE

The great Boyg wins all by gentleness.

PEER GYNT (*biting his own arms and hands*)

In my flesh plunge ravening teeth and claws!

I must feel my own warm blood a-dripping.

[*A sound is heard like the beating of the wings of
huge birds.*]

BIRD CRIES

Is he coming, Boyg?

VOICE

Ay, slowly slipping.

BIRD CRIES

All our sisters far off! To the tryst! Do not pause!

PEER GYNT

If you'd save me now, lass, be quick for I die!

Gaze not down before you, bending so low.

Your prayer-book! Straight at his eyes! There!
Throw!

BIRD CRIES

He totters!

VOICE

We have him!

BIRD CRIES

Sisters, swiftly fly!

PEER GYNT

Too dear the price that one pays for life

In such an agonized hour of strife. (*Sinks down*)

BIRD CRIES

Boyg! There he 's dropt! Quick! Seize him! Bind him!

[*The ringing of bells and psalm-singing are heard afar off.*]THE BOYG (*shrinks up to nothing and says in a gasp*)

He was too strong. There were women behind him.

SCENE EIGHT

Sunrise. The mountain-side in front of Åse's saeter. The door is shut; all is deserted and silent.

Peer Gynt is lying asleep by the wall of the saeter.

PEER GYNT (*wakes and looks about him with dull and heavy eyes; he spits*)

Oh! I wish I'd a pickled herring to chew!

(*Spits again, and at the same moment sees Helga, who appears with a basket of food*)

Ha! child, are you there? What is it you'd do?

HELGA

It is Solveig ——

PEER GYNT (*jumps up*)

Where is she?

HELGA

Behind there, alone.

SOLVEIG (*unseen*)

Come no nearer, or else away I will race.

PEER GYNT (*stops still*)

You 're afraid, I suppose, I shall try to embrace——?

SOLVEIG

For shame!

PEER GYNT

Do you know where I was in the night?

The Dovrë-King's daughter wants me for her
own.

SOLVEIG

Then it was well that we set the bells ringing.

PEER GYNT

Oh! Peer Gynt's not the lad to be lured by troll-
singing.

What do you say?

HELGA (*weeping*)

Oh! she's taken to flight!

(*Runs after her*)

Wait!

PEER GYNT (*catches her by the arm*)

In my pocket I've got something good for you!

A silver-stud, child! You may have it; see!

Only speak for me!

HELGA

Let go! Let me be!

PEER GYNT

Take it!

HELGA

Let go! There's the basket of food for you!

PEER GYNT

God pity you if you don't ——

HELGA

Uf, how you scare me!

PEER GYNT (*gently; letting her go*)

Nay; beseech her in remembrance to bear me!

[*Helga runs off.*]

END OF SECOND ACT

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE ONE

*Deep in the pine-woods. Grey autumnal weather.
Snow is falling.*

Peer Gynt stands in his shirt-sleeves and fells timber.

PEER GYNT (*hewing at a large fir with crooked branches*)

Ah! my ancient churl, you are stout and tall;
But 't is little use, for you 're doom'd to fall. (*Hews again*)

I see well enough you 've a shirt of steel;
Yet right through its strength my blows you shall
feel. —

Now you 're shaking your crooked arms on high;
You 've reason into a rage to fly;
But all the same you must bow the knee ——!
(*Breaks off abruptly*)

Lies! It is nought but an old, gnarl'd tree.

Lies! It is not a steel-clad churl;

It 's a fir, with split bark, whose branches curl. —

It is heavy work, this hewing of timber;

But to dream, while you hew, does n't make you more
limber. —

It 's all over — I 'm done with living in hazy

Lies, and in daylight dreaming me crazy.

You 're an outlaw, lad! In the woods are your ways.

Ay,

(*Hews for a while quickly*)

An outlaw; ay. You've no mother now, able
To bring you your food, and to spread you the table.
If you'd eat, my lad, you yourself must bring
Your rations raw from the wood and the spring,
Split your own fir-roots and build your own fire,
Arrange and prepare what you need and desire.
If you want warm clothes, you must stalk the deer;
If a house, you must quarry and bring your stones
here;

Would you timber the house, you must fell no lack
Of logs, and bring them along on your back. —
(*His axe sinks down; he looks straight in front of him*)

Brave shall the building be! See! rise there
Tower and vane, from the roof-tree, high and fair!
And I will carve, for a knob on the gable,
A mermaid, shaped like a fish from the navel.
The brass on the vane and the locks shall shimmer.
And the windows shall all be properly glazed.
Strangers that pass, shall ask, amazed
“What is that, far off on the hill a-glimmer?”

(*Laughs angrily*)

Devil's own lies! There they flock again quick.
You're an outlaw, lad! (*Hews vigorously*)

A hovel, no more,
Bark-thatcht, will keep rain and frost from the door.
(*Looks up at the tree*)

Now he is toppling. There; only a kick!
And he's dropt, and measures his length on the
ground —

And the undergrowth swarms and shudders around!
(*Begins to lop twigs from the trunk; suddenly listens
and stands still with his axe raised*)

There is some one there after me! What! Is it you
for me,

Old Hegstad churl? Would you try and do for me?
(*Crouches behind the tree, and peers over it*)

A lad. Only one. He seems terrified.

He peers all round him. What's that he would hide
'Neath his jacket? A sickle. He looks around;
stops;

Then flat on the fence-rail his hand is put.

What's he going to do now? Why, see how he
props —

Ugh! He's chopt off his finger! What a cut!

A whole finger off! Like an ox he is bleeding. —

With his hand swathed in rags fast away he is
speeding. (*Rises*)

What a devil! A finger off! Quite irreplaceable!

Right off! And none made him do such an unfaceable

Act. — I remember, of course; 't is but this that'll

Free you from serving the King in battle.

That's it. They wished him to war to be turning;

And the lad did n't want to go; mayhap, to fall —

But to chop —? To cut off for good and all —

Yes, think of it; wish it done; *will* it, withal —

But to *do* it! No; that's beyond my discerning!

(*Shakes his head a moment; then goes on with his
work again*)

SCENE TWO

*A room in Åse's house. Everything in disorder;
boxes stand open; clothes and dresses strewn all around;
a cat is on the bed.*

Åse and the Cotter's Wife are hard at work packing things together and setting them straight.

ÅSE (*running to one side*)

Kari, come here!

KARI

What now?

ÅSE (*on the other side*)

Come here! Where is —?

Where shall I find it —? Where — tell me — there
is —

What am I looking for? I'm out of my wits!

Where's the key of the chest?

KARI

In the key hole.

ÅSE

O! it's —

What's that rumbling I hear?

KARI

The last cart-load

That they're driving along on the Hegstad road.

ÅSE (*weeping*)

Would I in the black chest were driving away!

Ah! What troubles a mortal must bear in his day!

God have mercy! God help me! The house is stript
bare!

What the Hegstad churl left, the Bailiff collected.

Not even the clothes from my back were rejected.

It's a shame! Their decree was brutal, unfair!

(*Sits herself on the edge of the bed*)

The farm and the ground are lost to our line —

The old man was stern, but worse the law dealt with
me;

No mercy was shown, no sympathy felt with me —
Peer was away, and no counsel was mine.

KARI

You can live in this house, though, until you die.

ÅSE

Yes, can live upon charity, the cat and I!

KARI

God pity you, dame; your Peer cost you dear.

ÅSE

Peer? You are out of your senses, I fear!

Ingrid came back no worse for the revel.

'T was the foul fiend 't were right to put one's curse
on;

For he, and none else, was the guilty person;

Yes; my poor boy was tempted astray by the devil.

KARI

Now, won't it be best if I send for the Vicar?

Perhaps you are really worse than you know.

ÅSE

For the Vicar? Perhaps. I am feeling sicker.

(Starts up)

But, my God, no, I can't. I'm the lad's mother, oh!

I must help him; see what I can lay my hand on;

'T is mere duty to help him, when all men abandon.

There's his coat they have left him. I'll try and
patch it.

There's the fur-rug, I wish I'd the courage to
snatch it.

Where are his hose?

KARI

Mixt up with those rags. There!

ÅSE *(rummaging)*

What have we here? Kari, look! I declare

'T is the old casting ladle. With this he would play
Button-molder, melt buttons and shape and impress.
He came in, when there were guests, one day,
And asked his father for tin. "Oh yes!
But not tin," said John. "King's coins from the
Mint;
Silver; to show you 're the son of John Gynt."
God pardon him, he had drunk all he could hold,
And then he cared neither for tin nor gold.
Here 's the hose! They 're nothing but holes, they 're
so old.

They want darning, Kari!

KARI

That they do, sadly.

ÅSE

When that 's done, I 'll to bed. I 'm feeling badly.
I feel frail and poorly and broken — I — (*Joyfully*)
Two woollen shirts, Kari — they 've passed them by.

KARI

So they have.

ÅSE

Well, sometimes luck comes nigh.
You can put aside one of them, Kari. There.
Or rather, I think we 'll keep both. I could swear
The one he has on is worn-out and thin.

KARI

Oh, heavens! Mother Åse, I fear 't is a sin.

ÅSE

Well, well; but the Vicar has preached to us whence is
Forgiveness for this and our other offences.

SCENE THREE

In front of a newly built hut in the wood. Reindeer's horns are over the door. The snow lies deep. It is twilight.

Peer Gynt stands outside the door and fastens a large wooden bar to it.

PEER GYNT (*laughing at times*)

Bars I must fasten, to keep out the foeman,
To keep out the troll-folk, and man and woman.
Bars I must fasten; yes, bars I must fix in,
To keep out the bogie, the hobgoblin vixen.
They come in the night, with a tapping and blinking:
Open, Peer Gynt, we 're as nimble as thinking!
One 'neath the bed bustles, one rakes in the ashes,
Down the flue, like a fiery dragon, one dashes.
"Do you think, Peer, that bolting, or barring, or
locking
Can shut out the hobgoblin thoughts that are knock-
ing?"

[Solveig enters on snow-shoes over the heath; she has a shawl over her head and a bundle in her hand.]

SOLVEIG

God prosper your labor. You must not reject me.
I was call'd. I have come. And so you must protect me.

PEER GYNT

Solveig! It cannot be —! Yes, it is she —
And you are not afraid to come here to me!

SOLVEIG

I was call'd by the word you sent through my sister;
I was call'd, I was call'd in peace and in riot;
I was call'd, when I met your mother and kist her;

And her words bred dreams that still call'd me in
quiet.

Desolate days, and nights heavy and drear,
Called me away, and bade me come here.

Life seem'd stifled down there; I could not bring out
The tears from my heart, nor could laughter ring out.
I knew not for certain what you wanted or would do;
I knew but for certain what I must do and should do.

PEER GYNT

But your father?

SOLVEIG

Nowhere in God's earth at all
Are there any whom father or mother I call.
I have loosed me from all.

PEER GYNT

My Solveig! My own dear!
And to come here to me?

SOLVEIG

Yes: to you alone, dear;
You must be all; you must love and console me.
[*In tears.*
To leave little Helga, ah! that was the worst; —
But 't was worse when from my father I stole me;
And worst to leave her at whose breast I was nurst; —
Ah no! The worst sorrow, the hardest endeavor,
God forgive me! was from them all to sever!

PEER GYNT

And you know the decree that was pass'd in the
spring?
I forfeit farm, heritage, everything.

SOLVEIG

Think you for heritage, goods, and gear
I left my own people and wander'd here?

PEER GYNT

And you know that if outside the wood I betake me
Whoever meets me, can a prisoner make me?

SOLVEIG

I sped here on snow-shoes. "Where, then, do you
roam?"

Folks asked, when I questioned the way: I said,
"Home."

PEER GYNT

I can throw away nails and planks with impunity,
And locks meant for hobgoblin-thoughts' impor-
tunity!

If you with the hunter dare to dwell
The hut will be blessed with a holy spell.

Solveig! Let me look at you! Ah! not too near!
Only look at you! How fair! How pure! How
dear!

Let me lift you up! Oh! how light and how fine!
Let me carry you! I'll never tire, Solveig mine!
Your beautiful body I'll hold far away from me
Lest to it some stain or smirching may stray from me!
Who'd have thought I could draw you here for my
keeping; —

Ah! but how I have longed for you, waking and
sleeping.

You can see, I've been hewing and building, here;
But it's ugly and mean; it must down again
dear ——

SOLVEIG

Be it mean or brave — here is all to my mind.
One can breathe with such ease in the teeth of the
wind.

Down below it was stifling; one felt one's breath fail;

It was partly that drove me in fear from the dale.
But here, where the sougning of firs greets the ear, —
What a stillness and song! — I am in my home here.

PEER GYNT

Solveig, are you sure? Till your life's end? For
ever?

SOLVEIG

The path I have trodden leads back again — never!

PEER GYNT

Mine! In! Let me see you within, my desire!
Go in! I must fetch fir-roots for the fire;
The fire shall be cosy, with bright flames a-quiver,
You shall sit softly, my love, and ne'er shiver.
*[He opens the door; Solveig goes in. He stands still
for a moment; then laughs loudly for joy and leaps
into the air.]*

PEER GYNT

My own! My king's daughter! She is found, she's
my prize now!
Ah! the king's palace, built firm, shall arise now!
*[He seizes his axe and moves off; at the same moment
an Old-looking Woman, in a tattered green gown
comes out of the wood; an Ugly Brat, with an ale-
flagon in his hand, limps behind and holds on to her
skirt.]*

THE WOMAN

Good evening, Peer Swift-foot!

PEER GYNT

What's that? Who's there?

THE WOMAN

Old friends, Peer Gynt! I live quite close here, Peer.
We are neighbors.

PEER GYNT

Indeed? There I learn something new.

THE WOMAN

As your hut was builded, mine built itself too.

PEER GYNT

I 'm in haste.

THE WOMAN

Yes; that you always were, friend.

But I 'll trudge behind you and catch in the end.

PEER GYNT

You 're mistaken, good woman!

THE WOMAN

I was so before;

Mistaken in all that you promised and swore.

PEER GYNT

I promise —? What in hell do you mean by your blather?

THE WOMAN

You 've forgot the grand night when you drank with my father?

You 've forgot?

PEER GYNT

I 've forgot what I never have known.

What 's your chatter about? When met we last, crone?

THE WOMAN

When we met last was when we met first.

(*To The Brat*)

Give father a drink. I 'm sure he 's a-thirst.

PEER GYNT

Father? You 've been drinking? You dare call that imp ——?

THE WOMAN

Can't you tell the pig by his skin? Look there!
Where are your eyes? See! the boy's got a limp
In his leg, as you have in your soul, my Peer.

PEER GYNT

Would you have me believe ——?

THE WOMAN

Would you wriggle out ——?

PEER GYNT

That lanky imp?

THE WOMAN

He *has* grown.

PEER GYNT

You troll-snout!

Do you dare to attempt to father on me ——?

THE WOMAN

Come now, Peer Gynt, you're as rude as can be!
(*Weeping*)

Is it my fault, that I am not so pretty
As I was when you lured me with dance and ditty?
Last fall, in my travail, the Fiend gripped my back,
And of course I'm a fright after such an attack.
But if you would see me as fair as before,
You need but to turn that wench from your door,
Drive her away from your soul and your sight; —
And I'll lose my snout, love, and no more be a fright!

PEER GYNT

Begone from me, troll-witch!

THE WOMAN

Go away, Peer? Not I!

PEER GYNT

I will split your skull!

THE WOMAN

H'm, if you dare to, try!

Ha-ha, Peer Gynt, of that I've no fear.

I will come again every day of the year.

I will peep at you both, through the door set a-jar.

When you're tender and sit with your girl by the
ingle,

I'll watch how you pet, how caressing you are —

I'll sit down and in your embraces I'll mingle.

We will share you, we two; your love I'll divide with
her.

Farewell, dear! To-morrow to church you may ride
with her!

PEER GYNT

You nightmare of hell!

THE WOMAN

And of course there is that!

You light-footed loon, you must breed your own brat!

Little imp, will you go to your dad?

THE BRAT (*spits at him*)

Faugh, I'll hit

And chop you with my axe; only wait, wait a bit!

THE WOMAN (*kissing The Brat*)

What a head he has got on his shoulders, the cure!

When you're grown, you'll be dad's living image,
I'm sure!

PEER GYNT

Would you were as far ——!

THE WOMAN

As we are near now?

PEER GYNT (*clenching his hands*)

All this ——!

THE WOMAN

Only for thoughts and desires; I vow
It is hard on you, Peer!

PEER GYNT

'T is worst for another!
Solveig, my jewel, my maid of pure gold!

THE WOMAN

Said the devil, The guiltless must smart. His mother
Hit his head when his father 'd drunk all he could
hold!

*[She trudges into the thicket with The Brat who
throws the ale-flagon at Peer Gynt.]*

PEER GYNT *(after a long silence)*

Roundabout, said the Boyg. And so I must here —
My king's palace with clatter to pieces crashes!
There 's a wall around her, whom I was so near;
Of a sudden all 's ugly, my joy is but ashes. —
Roundabout, lad! There 's never a way
Right through this to where she is standing to-day.
Right through? There should be a way — there 's
a sentence,

Could I only recall it, that speaks of repentance.
But what? What is it? No book to remind me!
I 've forgotten it mostly, and here I can't find me
Any to help thrust this muddle behind me. —
Repentance? For years I might fight and wrestle
Ere I won my way through. 'T were a poor life and
hard.

What is lovely and pure to bray with a pestle,
Then remake it from many a fragment and shard!
You can mend a fiddle, but never a bell.
No use wishing lawns green, if you tramp them as
well.

But it's only a lie, this! That witch with her
snout!

Now is all their beastliness out of sight, out —

No — though out of sight, it is not out of mind.

Stealthily thoughts creep in from behind.

Ingrid! And the three, dancing on the hill-crest!

Will they want to share? Indignantly, spitefully,

Will they claim, as she, to be claspt to my breast?

In my outstretcht arms to be lifted delightfully?

Roundabout, lad! For though I possess

Arms as long as the roots of a fir, yet I fear,

Even then, I should hold my Solveig too near

To put her down stainless and pure and clear. —

I must roundabout here, as best I may;

I stand to gain nothing, lose nothing, that way.

One must put such things from one! Forget and
defy —

(Goes a little way towards the hut, but stops again)

Go in after this? Stain'd with muck of the sty?

Go in with that troll-rabble hard at my heel?

Speak, yet be silent? Confess, yet conceal —?

(Throws away his axe)

It's a holy-day evening. For me, as I am,

To keep tryst with my bride, were a sin fit to damn.

SOLVEIG *(in the doorway)*

Art coming?

PEER GYNT *(half aloud)*

Roundabout!

SOLVEIG

What?

PEER GYNT

You must wait.

I've got something heavy to fetch, and it's late.

SOLVEIG

Stay! I will help you. A burden? We'll share it.

PEER GYNT

No! Stay where you are, alone I must bear it.

SOLVEIG

Don't go too far, Peer!

PEER GYNT

Be patient, dear;

Be it far or near, you must wait.

SOLVEIG (*nodding after him*)

I'll wait here!

[*Peer Gynt goes down the path in the wood. Solveig stays, standing in the half-open door.*]

SCENE FOUR

Åse's room. Evening. A wood fire gives warmth and light. The cat is on a chair at the foot of the bed.

Åse lies on the bed and twitches restlessly at the coverlet.

ÅSE

O Lord my God, won't he come nigh me?

The night drags so slow and the day.

I've none to send tell him, how by me

Thoughts flash of the things I must say.

I have n't a moment to spare now!

Who'd ever have thought 't was so near!

Ah! the only thing that I care now

Is to know if I've been too severe!

PEER GYNT (*enters*)

Good evening!

ÅSE

The Lord give you gladness!

Then you have come! My boy, my dear!
But to enter the valley was madness!
You know your life's forfeit here.

PEER GYNT

Let life go as it will, no matter!
I was near, and I could n't have past.

ÅSE

Ay, now Kari has gone with her chatter,
I'll depart in peace at the last!

PEER GYNT

Depart! Why, where are you going?
What are you saying? Leave this?

ÅSE

My time to its close is growing;
Peer, the end is near; it is.

PEER GYNT (*writhing and going to the back of the room*)

See there now! I'm fleeing from sorrow;
Here at least I thought peace I'd have won!
Are your hands and feet cold?

ÅSE

To-morrow

It will all be over and done.
When my eyes have dimmed, dear, don't you
Forget to close them with care.
And you'll see to my coffin, won't you?
And have it a fine one, Peer?
Ah! no! I forgot —

PEER GYNT

Don't bother!

We'll think of such things when we must.

ÅSE

Yes (*looks restlessly round the room*)

The little they left your mother
You can see. It was like them, just.

PEER GYNT (*writhing*)

There again! (*Harshly*)

What's the use? Am I blinking

The fact that 't was I was to blame?

ÅSE

You! No! That damnable drinking,
From that the disaster came!
You know, you 'd had more than a drain, dear,
And then no one can tell what he's at;
Besides, you 'd been riding the reindeer;
No wonder you acted like that!

PEER GYNT

Yes, yes; let that old tale rest now.
Let the whole affair rest as it may.
All that is dreary, 't were best now
Let slip till — another day.
(*Sits on the edge of the bed*)
Now, mother, we 'll talk as of yore, dear;
Of this and of that, you and I;
Forget what is sharp and sore, dear,
And all that is crabb'd and awry.
There's old Puss on the chair a-sitting;
So she is alive and here?

ÅSE

Of nights she's growling and spitting;
You know what that bodes, my dear!

PEER GYNT (*changing the subject*)

Have you news here to greet my returning?

ÅSE (*smiling*)

They say, and it is not denied,
There's a girl for the highlands yearning —

PEER GYNT (*hastily*)

Mads Moën, is he satisfied?

ÅSE

They say that the old folk are praying
With tears, and she pays no heed.

You might run in, without staying —

You, Peer, might help in their need. —

PEER GYNT

What news of the smith now, mother?

ÅSE

Don't talk of the dirty tyke!

Let me tell you the name of that other,

The name of the girl; I'd like —

PEER GYNT

No, now we'll talk as of yore, dear,

Of this and of that, you and I;

Forget what is sharp and sore, dear,

And all that is crabb'd and awry.

Are you thirsty? Shall I bring you drink, dear?

Can you stretch yourself? That bed's a toy!

Let me see! Why, surely, I think, dear,

It's the bed that I had when a boy!

You sang many a song, you remember?

As you sat down here by my bed;

To shorten the nights of November,

And I had the fur over me spread.

ÅSE

Ah! remember! We play'd at sledges

When your father was far away; there

For our fiord with the sharp ice-edges

The floor; and our apron the fur.

PEER GYNT

Yes; but the best of course is —

Do you remember that, too,
Mother? — the fleet-footed horses —

ÅSE

Remember! Be sure I do!
We had Kari's cat as a loan, and
It sat on the chair; oh! the fun ——

PEER GYNT

To the Castle West of the Moon and
The Castle East of the Sun,
To Soria-Moria Castle,
High and low, the road ran wide.
We found a stick with a tassel:
'T will serve for a whip, we cried.

ÅSE

I sat up on the box seat proudly —

PEER GYNT

Yes; you drove with the reins quite slack
And turn'd, as we ran on, and loudly
Askt, was I cold? Did I lack?
God bless you, old mother mine, there!
You were always kindly, you —
Where is your pain?

ÅSE

At my spine. There
I can feel the hard boards through.

PEER GYNT

Stretch yourself! I will be loving
And hold you! Now you lie soft.

ÅSE (*restlessly*)

No, Peer, I 'd be moving!

PEER GYNT

Moving?

ÅSE

Aye, moving, I want to oft.

PEER GYNT

Nonsense! A short night I'll bring you;
I will sit down here by the bed;
And many a song I will sing you;
See! the fur is over you spread!

ÅSE

My pray'r book, Peer! It, ere I pass, 'll
Console me. I'm troubled at heart!

PEER GYNT

In Soria-Moria Castle
The King's feast is going to start.
Lie snug 'mid the cushions hidden;
Right over the heath we will fare.

ÅSE

But Peer, darling, are we bidden?

PEER GYNT

Yes, mother, both of us.
*(Throws a string round the chair the cat is on;
takes a stick in his hand and sits at the foot of the
bed)*

There!

Gee-up! Come, Black-beauty, go it!
Are you cold, mother? Anything wrong?
Aye-aye; by the pace we know it,
When Granë gallops along!

ÅSE

Ah Peer, dear, what is that ringing?

PEER GYNT

'T is the glittering sledge-bells, dear!

ÅSE

There's a hollow rumbling and swinging!

PEER GYNT

We cross over a fiord just here!

ÅSE

I'm afraid! What is that I hear sighing
And rushing so wild and drear?

PEER GYNT

It's the fir-trees, mother, a-crying!
Sit still, and have no fear.

ÅSE

Far-off there's a sparkling and gleaming!
Whence comes that glittering day?

PEER GYNT

From the Castle windows 't is streaming.
Can you hear them, they're dancing?

ÅSE

Aye.

PEER GYNT

Outside there stands Saint Peter
And prays you to enter in.

ÅSE

Poor Åse?

PEER GYNT

He's honor'd to greet her;
And brings the best wine from the bin.

ÅSE

Wine, Peer! And are there cakes there?

PEER GYNT

Rather! a heaped-up plate!
And the late Dean's wife she makes there
Your coffee right by the gate.

ÅSE

Shall I meet her after arriving?

PEER GYNT

As much as you care to do.

ÅSE

Ah! Peer, what a feast you 're driving
Your poor old mother to!

PEER GYNT (*cracking the whip*)

Gee-up! Come, Black-beauty, hurry!

ÅSE

Dear! Are you going right still?

PEER GYNT (*cracking again*)

Yes, the road is broad.

ÅSE

The scurry,
The pace makes me tired and ill.

PEER GYNT

You can see now the castle rise, and
The journey is nearly done.

ÅSE

I will lie down, close my eyes and
Trust me to you, my son!

PEER GYNT

Come up now, Granë, and hustle!
There 's a throng in the castle drive;
At the gates they swarm and bustle.
Peer Gynt and his mother arrive!
What say you now, Lord Saint Peter?
Is n't mother allow'd in there?
You 'll search long, ere you will meet a
Body more honest, I 'll swear,
Of myself I make no boast, Sir;
I can turn at the gate and go.
Should you treat me, I 'll drink a toast, Sir,
Thankfully; if not, so!

Of fibs I have told as many
As the fiend at the pulpit-cush,
I have call'd my mother "Henny"
'Cause she cluckt like a bird in a bush.
But here with respect you shall greet her
And give her due honor and praise.
For there does n't come any to beat her
From the parish nowadays. —
Ho-ho! God the Father's coming!
Saint Peter, you're up a tree! (*In a deep voice*)
"Stop these airs, this official ha'humming!
Mother Åse shall enter free!"
(*Laughs loudly and turns to his mother*)
There you see, what did I say, dear?
Now they're singing a different song! (*In terror*)
Your eyes are dim! Don't look that way, dear!
Are you faint —? Are you —? Mother! What's
wrong?
(*Goes to the bed-head*)
You must n't lie there and stare so!
Speak, mother! It's I, your son!
(*Feels her forehead and hands with care; throws the
string on the chair and says quietly*)
Now, Granë, the whip I can spare. So!
The journey is really done.
(*Closes her eyes and bends over her*)
Thanks for each cuddle and smack now,
For all that you were when alive!
But see! you must thank me back now —
(*Presses his cheek to her mouth*)
There; that was thanks for the drive.

KARI (*enters*)

What? Peer! Here's an end to weeping!

The worst of our need is fled!
Dear Lord, how sound she is sleeping!
Or can she be ——?

PEER GYNT

Hush! She is dead.

[Kari weeps over the body. Peer Gynt walks round the room for a while; finally he stands beside the bed.]

PEER GYNT

Fine let her funeral be, dame.
Forth from here I must try and get.

KARI

Are you going far?

PEER GYNT

To the sea, dame.

KARI

So far!

PEER GYNT

Aye, and farther yet. (*Goes out*)

END OF THIRD ACT

THE FOURTH ACT

SCENE ONE

On the North-West coast of Morocco. A palm-grove. A table spread for dinner is under an awning on rush matting. Further back in the grove hang hammocks. Off the land lies a steam-yacht, flying the Norwegian and American flags. On the beach a jolly-boat. It is towards sunset.

Peer Gynt, a handsome, middle-aged man, in an elegant travelling-suit, with gold-rimmed pince-nez hanging on his breast, presides at the head of the table. Mr. Cotton, Monsieur Ballon, with Herr von Eberkopf and Herr Trumpeterstråle are finishing dinner.

PEER GYNT

Drink! If man was for pleasure meant,
He must pursue the things that please now.
You know 't is written. Spent is spent,
And lost is lost — Do have some cheese now!

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

Brother, you 're princely as a host!

PEER GYNT

Why, of my cash and cook you might
Assert the same, my steward ——

MR. COTTON

Right!

Here's to the four of you! A toast!

MONSIEUR BALLON

Monsieur, you have a *goût*, a *ton*,

That nowadays is seldom found
Among men living *en garçon*,
Something, I know not what ——

VON EBERKOPF

A tinge,

A spice of free soul-contemplation,
And internationalization,
An outlook, past the cloudy fringe,
By narrow prejudice unbound,
A stamp of high illumination,
An *Ur-Natur*, a life-sensation,
To crown the trilogy, united.
'T was that, Monsieur, you wished to say?

MONSIEUR BALLON

Perhaps; it would not sound that way,
So loftily, in French recited.

VON EBERKOPF

Ei was! A stiff tongue. We explore
The Absolute, the Cause, the steady
And final thing ——

PEER GYNT

'T is found already.

The point is, I 'm a bachelor.
Yes, gentlemen. The matter is
Completely clear. What should a man be?
Himself, I answer, brief as can be.
He should care for himself and his.
But can he if, a mule, he bears
The load of others' joys and cares?

VON EBERKOPF

This in-and-for-yourselfness led, it
Must, I should think, to certain strife ——

PEER GYNT

It did, when I was starting life:
But always I came off with credit.
Once, 'gainst my will, I very nearly
Did get entrapp'd. I was, you see,
Brisk, handsome, young, just ripe for marriage;
The girl, whom I loved very dearly,
She was of royal family ——

MONSIEUR BALLON

Of royal ——?

PEER GYNT (*carelessly*)

Yes, you know; allied to
The ancient lines ——

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE (*hitting the table*)

These noble trolls!

PEER GYNT (*shrugging his shoulders*)

Old Fossil Highnesses! their pride to
Keep the line pure, and to have tried to
Have no plebeian on their rolls.

MR. COTTON

And so the end was a miscarriage?

MONSIEUR BALLON

Her father frown'd on the alliance?

PEER GYNT

Far from it!

MONSIEUR BALLON

Ah!

PEER GYNT (*forbearingly*)

You understand
Reasons there were, made them demand
Th' affair should pass beyond affiance.
That from the start the thing was far
From pleasant to me, must be granted.

In some things I 'm particular,
I like to stand alone, firm-planted.
So when the lady's father came
And made proposals vague, and hinted
That I had better change my name,
And have a coat-of-arms imprinted,
With other things that did n't strike at all
My fancy, things I did n't like at all —
I gracefully withdrew; replied
"No" to his final proposition —
And so renounced my youthful bride.
(*Drums on the table with a pious air*)
Yes; there's a Fate guides our ambition!
There can we mortals put reliance;
And 't is a comfortable science.

MONSIEUR BALLON

And so the matter ended there?

PEER GYNT

Oh no! Some fellows most intrusive,
Who were excessively abusive,
Mixt themselves up in the affair.
Worst were the house's youngest scions.
I fought with seven, as strong as lions.
It was a time I shan't forget,
Though I pull'd through, and live as yet.
It cost me blood; the blood I've spent
Attests my value with precision,
And clearly points to that event,
Mention'd above, Fate's supervision.

VON EBERKOPF

The view you take of life, Herr Peer,
Gives you the name Philosopher.
For where the commonplace empiric

Sees all in scraps, and naught generic,
And never stops his stupid stumbling,
You hold all things at once, unfumbling.
One norm you use for all and each;
You point each random illustration
To one great centre, and so reach
A glorious life-contemplation!
And you have never been to College?

PEER GYNT

I am, I told you once, I thought,
A man exclusively self-taught.
To steady methods I ne'er took;
But I have thought and studied knowledge,
And skimmed the gist of many a book.
I did n't start till I was getting
Well on in years; 't is hard then, setting
The mind to know a subject truly,
The ins and outs to study duly.
Historians I have open'd fitfully;
I've had no time for learning real.
And since one needs, when life's a bubble,
To trust to some profound ideal,
Religion I have taken flitfully;
It slides down so, without much trouble.
Don't read to swallow! Read to choose, for
'T is but to see what one has use for.

MR. COTTON

Practical, that is!

PEER GYNT (*lighting a cigar*)

Let's recall then,
Dear friends, the stages of my story.
How came I to the land of glory
Out West? Dead poor, my hands my all then!

I fought for bread 'mid all that glitter;
Believe me, it was hard, severe.
But life, my friends, ah! life is dear;
And, as they tell us, death is bitter.
Well, Luck, ere long, you know, was kind to me;
And old Fate, too, he had a mind to me;
I prosper'd. Some gifts were assigned to me
At birth. I used them. Prosper'd more.
In ten years' time this name I bore:
"The Cræsus of the Charlestown shipping."
My fame flew fast from lip to lip in
Port after port. Luck sail'd aboard —

MR. COTTON

What did you trade in?

PEER GYNT

Most I scored

By Negro-slaves for Carolina
And idol-images for China.

MONSIEUR BALLON

Fi donc!

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

The devil! Uncle Gynt.

PEER GYNT

The trade was almost absolutely
Impossible is what you 'd hint?
I felt the same myself acutely.
I thought it ev'n abominable,
But, pray believe me, once you 're in 't,
To break away you 'll scarce be able.
'T is very hard to interrupt
So vast a business, so expensive,
Employing thousands in extensive
Enterprise; to end all abrupt.

It's that "abrupt" I can't abide;
But own, upon the other side
I've always found myself agree
With those who care for consequences;
And that to over-step the fences
Has never seem'd quite nice to me.
Besides that, youth and I were sundering;
Back to the forties no endeavor
Would take me; and my hair was gray;
And though my health could not be better,
A thought clung to me, like a fetter;
Who knows, how soon may dawn the day
When the great verdict shall be thundering
That parts the sheep and goats forever?
What could I do? I could n't stop them,
The idols, it was evident.
I found a way, nor had to drop them;
With the old another trade I blent.
Each spring the gods I still exported;
Each autumn preachers I escorted,
Supplying them with all they wanted,
As stockings, Bibles, rice and rum ——

MR. COTTON

Yes, at some profit?

PEER GYNT

Yes; at some.

It prosper'd. The true seed they planted.
For every idol that was sold,
They got a coolie in the fold,
And so the effect was neutralized.
Fallow the field was never lying;
The idols, which were pushed and prized,
Still with the mission-work were vying.

MR. COTTON

What of the African commodities?

PEER GYNT

There too my ethic won the fight.
The trade for those could not be right,
Whose hair was thin, and gray the tint of it.
The end oft comes without a hint of it.
And then the philanthropic oddities
Carefully laid a thousand traps;
Besides so many a busybody, 't is
A risk from weather and mishaps.
At all these who his finger snaps?
I said, now Peter, take a reef in
Your sails! Stop sins that you've been chief in!
In land down south I speculated,
Kept back the last carcass-consign,
Which happened to be very fine.
They grew so sleek and fat past measure
It was to me and them a pleasure.
I've said too, nor exaggerated,
I was their father — and was blest
By getting a fair interest.
I built them schools; and so a stated
Amount of virtue might be gain'd
And at a level strict maintain'd;
And care I took that not at all
Below that level it should fall.
Now, to save further perturbation,
I've withdrawn from the whole affair;
Finally, sold the slave-plantation
And all the live-stock, hide and hair.
At parting, too, I gave to all
Grog *gratis*, both to big and small;

Men, women, had a drunken riot,
And widows took their snuff in quiet.
And so I hope — and I am not
Rash, if the ancient saying's true,
That those do good, who no ill do —
That my past errors are forgot;
I think my virtue is availing
To balance 'gainst my frequent failing.

VON EBERKOPF (*chinks glasses with him*)

What strengthening thoughts your words awaken!
A principle you bold apply,
Freed from the night of theory,
By all external stir unshaken!

PEER GYNT (*during the preceding passages he has applied himself steadily to the bottle*)

With us North men the town is taken
If it's besieged at all. The master,
Prevailing key of life's nought but
To keep one's ear securely shut
Against a snake that brings disaster.

MR. COTTON

And what's this foe that we must cut?

PEER GYNT

One, who with slyness unbelievable
Tempts us to do the irretrievable. (*Drinking again*)
The true whole of the Art of daring,
Of real pluck in act the Art —
Is this: choice-free to stand, apart,
Midst all life's treachery and snaring —
To know for sure, another day
Remains beyond the day of battle;
To know a bridge is standing, that 'll
Bear you if you retrace your way.

This theory far has carried me;
From it the note of my career is;
Again, this rule by which I steer is
From childhood's home a legacy.

MONSIEUR BALLON

You are Norwegian?

PEER GYNT

Yes, by birth;
A citizen of all the earth
In soul; for luck that's come my way
I have to thank America.
The later German schools have given
The books on which my mind has thriven.
From France there has come many a vest for me,
My manners, and my spice of wit —
From England hands for labor fit
And a keen sense of what is best for me;
The Jew has taught me how to wait,
While *dolce* — we all learn ere twenty,
So I, from Italy, *far niente*.
And once, when in a parlous strait,
To turn completely my life's wheel,
I had recourse to Swedish steel.

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE (*lifting his glass*)

Yes, Swedish steel — — !

VON EBERKOPF

The man who sways
The steel sword first demands our praise!
[*They clink glasses and drink with him. The wine
begins to go to his head.*]

MR. COTTON

All this is very good, I see.

But, sir, one thing still worries me —
What with your gold d' you think of doing?

PEER GYNT

H'm. Doing? What?

ALL FOUR (*coming nearer*)

Let 's hear what 's brewing!

PEER GYNT

First I would get some travel out of it.
You see, sirs, that 's why I shipped you
To keep me company, at Gibraltar.
A choir of friends I needed, who
Would dance around my gold-calf altar ——

VON EBERKOPF

A witty word!

MR. COTTON

But there 's no doubt of it,
None hoists sails merely for the sailing.
There is some port that you 'd be hailing.
And that is ——?

PEER GYNT

To be Emperor.

ALL FOUR

What?

PEER GYNT (*nodding*)
Emperor!

ALL FOUR

Where?

PEER GYNT

The whole world over!

MONSIEUR BALLON

But how, friend?

PEER GYNT

By the might of money!

The plan, you know, is nothing new;
In it my true soul I discover.
Ev'n as a boy, in visions sunny,
On clouds far o'er the sea I flew.
With golden scabbard and with train
I soar'd — then down I dropp'd again.
But, friends, I ne'er forgot my port. —
There's a text, or something of the sort,
Somewhere, I don't remember where:
If you gain'd the whole world, it said,
And lost yourself, your great gain were
A garland on a cloven head.
That text, or something like, in youth
I heard; and it is sober truth.

VON EBERKOPF

The Gyntish self? What is it, brother?

PEER GYNT

The world behind my forehead level,
By which I am not any other
Than I, no more than God's the Devil.

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

A-ha, I see now where you'd climb!

MONSIEUR BALLON

Thinker superb!

VON EBERKOPF

Poet sublime!

PEER GYNT (*with rising voice*)

The Gyntish self — what can it be
But wishes, longings, appetites?
The Gyntish self — it is the sea
Of exigencies, whims, and rights!
All that to *my* heart motion's giving;
All, by which I, as I, am living.

But as the Lord requires the clay
For worlds, which Him as God obey;
So I need gold if I would stand
Emperor over every land.

MONSIEUR BALLON

But you have gold?

PEER GYNT

Not enough pelf.
P'raps for a wonder nine-days-old,
An Emperor *à la Lippe-Detmold*.
But I must be *en bloc* myself,
The Gynt o'er all the globe victorious,
Sir Gynt, from top to bottom, glorious!

MONSIEUR BALLON (*in transports*)

Of world-beauty to be proprietor!

VON EBERKOPF

Johannisberger ages old!

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

And all the blades of Karl the Bold!

MR. COTTON

But first a business-opening quiet, or
Some wider scheme ——

PEER GYNT

That is provided;
Our anchoring at this point supplied it.
To-night we sail off northerly.
Letters on board, that came to me,
Have brought me tidings most momentous —
(*Rises with lifted glass*)
Fate never keeps us in the prison
If we 've the pluck to use what 's lent us ——

THE FOUR

Well? Tell us — Quickly!

PEER GYNT

Greece has risen.

THE FOUR (*jumping up*)

What? Greece ——?

PEER GYNT

Is settled for a fight.

THE FOUR

Hurrah!

PEER GYNT

And Turkey's in a plight.

(*Empties his glass*)

MONSIEUR BALLON

To Hellas! Glory's gate stands wide!

The sword of France is on their side!

VON EBERKOPF

For them my shouts (far off) shall rise!

MR. COTTON

I'll help (for payment) with supplies!

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

Lead on! In Bender I shall find

The buckles Charles XII left behind!

MONSIEUR BALLON (*falling on Peer Gynt's neck*)

Forgive me! For a moment, look you,

I did misjudge ——!

VON EBERKOPF (*pressing his hands*)

And I mistook you,

Dog! dolt! for just a scoundrel utter!

MR. COTTON

Too strong that! Say, of fools a sample ——

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE (*tries to kiss him*)

I, Uncle, for a mean example

Of the worst products of the gutter

Of U. S. A. ——!

VON EBERKOPF

We 've all been groping ——

PEER GYNT

The deuce!

VON EBERKOPF

Now see we, past our hoping,
In glory gathered on the heights,
The Gyntish whims and appetites —— !

MONSIEUR BALLON (*admiringly*)

This is Sir Gynt! This your idea!

VON EBERKOPF

'T is Gynt with honor!

PEER GYNT

It would be a

Kindness to ——

MONSIEUR BALLON

You don't see it? Eh?

PEER GYNT

See? If I do, may I be damn'd!

MONSIEUR BALLON

What are you not upon your way
To Greece, your ship with money cramm'd?

PEER GYNT

No, many thanks! I side with might,
Send cash to help the Turks to fight.

MONSIEUR BALLON

Impossible!

VON EBERKOPF

Witty, but a joke!

PEER GYNT

(*After a little, leaning on his chair and assuming a dignified mien*)

Come, gentlemen, I think it best
We part, before we lose the rest
Of friendship blown away like smoke.
Who nothing has will lightly risk it.
The man who scarcely owns the earth
His shadow hides, to war may frisk it;
He's food for powder from his birth.
One who's a sound and stable figure
As I am — well, his stake is bigger.
Go ye to Hellas. I will arm you
Gratis and put you all ashore;
The more you sound war's wild alarm, you
Will serve my purposes the more.
Strike home for freedom and for right!
Give the Turks hell and hell's hot night —
And end, like heroes in romances,
Pierced by the Janissaries' lances. —
But I —— (*Slaps his pocket*)
I've cash. I am not in 't,
But am myself, Sir Peter Gynt.
(*Puts up his sun-shade, goes into the grove, where one
has a glimpse of hammocks*)

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

The swinish cur!

MONSIEUR BALLON

No taste for glory —— !

MR. COTTON

Oh! glory's quite another story!
But think what profits there would be
For us if Greece did struggle free.

MONSIEUR BALLON

I saw myself with conquests laden
And clasp'd by many a Grecian maiden!

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

Ah! in my Swedish hand I grasp'd
The buckles that a king's shoes clasp'd!

VON EBERKOPF

The culture of my Fatherland
I saw dispersed on every hand —— !

MR. COTTON

The loss in cash will stop me sleeping!
Damn it! I scarce can keep from weeping!
I saw me as Olympus' lord.
If true that mountain's reputation
It would good copper still afford,
If we set up a mining-station.
Then there's Castalia, that river
Which people talk about forever;
Its falls, at a low estimate,
Must be a thousand horse-power's weight —— !

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

I'll go! My Swedish sword so bold
Is worth far more than Yankee gold!

MR. COTTON

Perhaps; but jamm'd into the tussle
We'd be submerged, kill'd in the bustle;
And then whence does the profit come?

MONSIEUR BALLON

Accurst! So near to fortune's crown;
And now arrested at its tomb!

MR. COTTON (*shaking his fist at the yacht*)

In that black chest is hammer'd down
The nabob's golden nigger-sweat —— !

VON EBERKOPF

A royal notion! Quick! We'll get —

Away! His empire goes to pot!
Hurra!

MONSIEUR BALLON

What will you?

VON EBERKOPF

Seize the pow'r!
I'll buy the crew within the hour.
On board then! I annex the yacht!

MR. COTTON

You —— what ——?

VON EBERKOPF

I grab it all — the lot!
(*Goes down to the jolly-boat*)

MR. COTTON

Self-interest also orders me
To grab my share. (*Goes after him*)

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

What villainy!

MONSIEUR BALLON

A scurvy trick —! But — *enfin!* What?
(*Follows the others*)

TRUMPETERSTRÅLE

Well, I must go, too, with the rest,
But to the whole world I protest ——! (*Follows*)

SCENE TWO

Another part of the coast. Moonlight with drifting clouds. The yacht, far out, is going at full speed.

Peer Gynt comes tearing along the beach. Now he is pinching his arms; now looking out over the sea.

PEER GYNT

A nightmare! A phantom. Soon I'll be waking!
Out to sea! What a furious pace she is making!
A mere phantom! I'm sleeping! I'm drunk! dizzy,
— I!

(Clenches his hands)

It's impossible that I am going to die!

(Tears his hair)

A dream! I will it's a dream! It's mere fudge!
O monstrous! It's real, this vision of fear —!
My brute-beasts of friends! Oh! Lord, do Thou
hear!

Since Thou art so wise and so righteous! O,
Judge —!

(With upstretched arms)

It is I, Peter Gynt! Lord, hearken! 'T is I!
If Thou care not for me, O Father, I die!
Make them back the machine! Or the jolly-boat
lower!

Stop the robbers! Make something go wrong with
the power!

Hearken! Let other folks' business lie by a bit!
The world can look after itself for a minute,
As usual, He's deaf! Does n't heed, though I cry,
a bit!

A nice thing! A God with a bank — and nought
in it!

(Beckons upwards)

Hist! I've got rid of the nigger plantation!
And I've sent good priests to the heathen Asian!
One good turn is worth another, Lord!
O, help me on board ——!

[A jet of fire shoots into the air from the yacht, and

heavy smoke rolls up. A hollow report is heard. Peer Gynt shrieks, and sinks on to the sand. Gradually the smoke fades away; the ship has disappeared.

PEER GYNT

'T was the Wrath and the Sword!
In a crack! To the bottom. All hands struck —!
Oh, forever praised be the happy duck —
(*With emotion*)

Luck? It was more than that, much more! I,
I was to be saved and they were to die.
O, thanks and praise to Thee who hast wielded
Thy might for me, kept me in spite of my sins —
(*Draws a deep breath*)

What a wonderful peace to the bosom wins
When a man can know he is specially shielded.
But the desert! What about eating and drinking?
O, I shall find something. He's able to cherish.
There's no danger really. (*Loudly and ingratiatingly*)

He's sure to be thinking
That a poor little sparrow like me must n't perish.
Be humble! Don't badger Him! There is no need!
Put your cares on the Lord, and don't be down-
hearted —

(*With a start of terror*)
A lion that growl'd in the reeds there and started —
(*His teeth chattering*)

No, it was n't a lion. (*Plucking up courage*)

A lion, indeed!

These beasts, they take care to keep out of disasters.
They know it's not safe to fall foul of their masters.
They have instinct; they feel, and it goes without
saying

With elephants it is but dangerous playing. —
But, nevertheless, what I want now is trees.
Over there there's a grove of acacias and palms;
If I once clomb up, I'd feel more at my ease —
Particularly if I knew a few psalms — (*Clambers up*)
Morn and eve are not similar. That's a text which
Has often enough been considered and sifted.
(*Seats himself comfortably*)
How precious to feel in the spirit uplifted.
To think nobly is more than to know oneself rich.
Only trust in Him. What from the cup of need
I can bear to drain He knows to a jot.
For my personal weal He takes fatherly heed —
(*Casts a glance over the sea, and whispers with a sigh*)
But economical — no, that He's not.

SCENE THREE

*Night. A camp of Moors on the edge of the desert.
Watch-fires with soldiers resting.*

A SLAVE (*enters tearing his hair*)

Gone is the Emperor's charger! Grief!

ANOTHER SLAVE (*enters rending his garments*)

The Emperor's sacred robes are stolen!

AN OFFICER (*enters*)

We'll thrash until his feet are swollen

The man who fails to catch the thief!

[*The soldiers mount their horses and gallop off in all directions.*]

SCENE FOUR

Daybreak. The clump of acacias and palms.

Peer Gynt in his tree with a broken branch in his hand is keeping off a swarm of monkeys.

PEER GYNT

Damn it! A most disagreeable night!

(Hits around him)

Are you there again? Damnation and curses;
Now they throw fruit. No; it something far worse is,
Of all beasts your monkey's the loathsomest, quite!
'T is the Scripture that says: Thou shalt watch and
wrestle.

I'm too sleepy to watch, and too tired to fight.

(Is attacked again; impatiently)

O! if I don't stop it, this damnable pest'll —!

I must capture a monkey, some villainous fright,
And hang him and flay him and scramble inside,
As well as I can, the brute's shaggy hide;

They'll take me for an ape, if in ape's skin I nestle —
What is man? A mote. And the world's a bubble,
And to follow the use and wont saves trouble. —

There's the rabble again! They swarm and throng.
Get away! Shoo! They behave as though frantic.

If I had a false tail now, with which I could antic —
Could I turn to a beast all these monkeys among —
What's that? There's a pattering over my head
there —!

(Looks up)

It's the old one — with both of his fists full of
muck —!

(Crouches nervously and keeps still for a while. The

monkey moves: Peer Gynt begins to coax and wheedle him, as though he were a dog)

Yes; are you there then, good old Bus! 'Gluck!

He's a jolly beast! Yes! He'll by reason be led!

There!

He'd never throw down, no, of course he would not —

It is me! Pip-pip! The same house we belong to!

Ai-ai! Don't you hear, I can speak your tongue too?

Bus and I, why, we have made friends on the spot;

Bus shall have sugar to-morrow —! You animal!

The whole lot on top of me! Loathsome! Is't credible —

The taste was, well — nondescript — that it was edible?

For taste is a matter of habit, that's all.

What thinker was it said somewhere: Spit

And trust to habit to conquer it? —

Here's the small fry too!

(Hits and slashes about him)

What devils they are!

It's a shame that Man, who's the Lord of Creation,

Should find himself forced to — Hell! Damnation!

The old one was bad, but the young are worse far!

SCENE FIVE

Early morning. A stony place with a view out over the desert. On one side a cleft in the hill and a cave.

A Thief and a Receiver in the cleft with the Emperor's horse and robes. The horse, richly caparisoned, is standing tied to a stone. Horsemen afar off.

THE THIEF

The tongues of the lances

Flickering, glittering —
See, see!

THE RECEIVER

Already my limbs are
The sand-plain littering;
Woe 's me!

THE THIEF (*folds his arms over his breast*)

My father, he thieved;
His son he must thief, too.

THE RECEIVER

My father received;
His son must receive, too.

THE THIEF

Still thy weird is to thee;
Still thyself thou shalt be.

THE RECEIVER (*listening*)

Steps in the brushwood!
Flee, flee! But whither?

THE THIEF

Deep the cave is; and great
The Prophet! Hither!

[*They flee away and leave the booty behind. The Horsemen disappear in the distance.*]

PEER GYNT (*enters, cutting a reed-whistle*)

What a genial morning it is! How bland! —

In the dust with his ball the dung-beetle is creeping,
Forth from his dwelling the snail is peeping.

The morning! She comes with gold in each hand. —

And with pow'r, with a wonderful pow'r she 's full,

The power that 's the daylight's, by Nature's favor.

One feels so secure, one feels so much braver,

If need was, one would cheerfully close with a bull. —

What a stillness! The country! How beautiful it is! —

It's a mystery how all this I've ignored;
Man shuts himself up in the hugest of cities
Merely to live with a mob and be bored. —
Just look how the lizards are frisking around,
Snapping and thinking of nought, I'll be bound.
The life of the beasts is with innocence rife!
Each fulfils its Creator's commands, unambiguous,
Each keeps its own marks plain, however exiguous,
Is itself, itself both in sport and in strife,
Itself, as when first He granted it life.

A toad. In the midst of the rock. The rough
Stone is all round him. His head only peers from it.
He sits framed, as in a window, and leers from it
At the world and is to himself — enough —

(Reflectively)

Enough? To himself? Do I know whence that
phrase is?

I have read it, in some so-called classic, in youth.
In the sermons? In Solomon's words of truth?
Alas! Year by year, I notice, the case is
I'm losing my memory for dates and places.

(Sits down in the shade)

In the cool one can rest and stretch out one's feet.
Here are ferns growing. Roots, too, good to eat.

(Eats a little)

For an animal, sure, this food, would be meeter —
But the text says: "Bridle the natural creature!"
And 'tis written: the pride of the proud shall
tumble.

And exalted he'll be, who makes himself humble.

(Uneasily)

Exalted? Yes, that must be my lot, it's plain —
Anything else! The idea's inexpressible!

Fate will help me away from this place inaccessible,
And contrive for me, so I can start again.

— This is only a trial; deliverance is sure —

Pray God that my health and strength endure.

(Puts his thoughts away, lights a cigar, stretches himself and gazes over the desert)

What an enormous waste! Without limit! —

Far off an ostrich strides over the sand. —

What did God really mean, when He plann'd

This deadness, this voidness, this freak of earth's
forces?

This desert, bereft of all of life's sources;

This cinder, no profit to any? How grim it

Lies, of the earth the one patch always fallow!

This corpse, since God will'd earth from nothing to
ravish,

Has n't deign'd, ev'n with thanks, His name to
hallow.

Why was it created? — Nature is lavish —

Is that sea, in the east, that flickers and strikes

My vision! No, it's a mirage. Now I mind me

The sea's in the west: it lies piled up behind me,

From the desert damm'd out by a slanting dyke.

(A thought flashes through him)

Damm'd out! Then I could —? For the dyke is
but narrow.

Damm'd out? A canal, a mere breach in the
barrow —

Like a river of life then the waters would

Run through the canal, and the desert flood!

Soon would yon grave, glowing-hot, without motion,

Extend as a fresh and a rippling ocean.
The oases would rise in the midst, like islands;
Atlas would lift, on the north, his green load;
Sailing-ships would, like birds home from the high-lands,
Skim to the south, on the caravans' road.
The vapors would vanish, 'fore life-giving breezes,
And the dews from the clouds would be quickly distill'd;
Town after town would the people build,
And the grass grow green where the shadow of trees is.
Down south, the Sahara's wall behind,
The land is a coast for fresh culture designed.
Steam would set Timbuctoo's factories spinning;
We 'd colonize Bornu in famous style;
And through Habes the explorer his way would be winning
Safe in a train to the Upper Nile.
Midst of my sea, on a fat oasis,
I will found their new home, the Norwegian race's;
Our blood's kin to that in a royal breast,
And Arab crossing will do the rest.
By a bay there will rise, on a shelving strand,
Peeropolis, my capital city.
The world is decrepit! The moment is fit: I
Found Gyntiana, my virgin land; (*gets up*)
Had I the money 't would finisht be.
A key of gold for the gate of sea!
A crusade against death! He shall give up the keys
Of that chest, where, the miser! he hoards at his ease.
Men in every land are for liberty raving—

Like the ass in the ark I will send forth my cries
Over the world, and to Her will baptize
The beautiful, thrall-bound coasts I am saving.
I must forth! To find money, in th' east or the west!
My kingdom — a half in the east or the west!
Half — for a horse to help in my quest!

(The horse in the cleft neighs)

A horse! And robes! And a sword! And fine
trinkets!

(Goes closer)

It can't be! It is though —! What? I've heard
tell,

Or read somewhere, that Faith can move — moun-
tains — I think it's —

But what about moving a horse as well —?

Pooh! It's plain fact; here's the horse to go on;
For the rest, *ab esse ad posse*, and so on —

(Puts on the robes, and looks down at them)

Sir Peter — a Turk too, from top to toe!

Well, men never can tell what path Fate'll show
them —

Gee-up, now Granë, let's see how you go!

(Leaps into the saddle)

Golden stirrups under my feet, too! O!

The great, by their riding-gear men know them!

(Gallops off into the desert)

SCENE SIX

Tent of an Arab chief, alone in an oasis.

*Peer Gynt in his Eastern dress, resting on cushions.
He is drinking coffee, and smoking a long pipe. Anitra
and a bevy of girls dance and sing before him.*

CHORUS OF GIRLS

The Prophet is come!
The Lord Prophet, all things unravelling.
To us, to us is he come
O'er the sand-ocean travelling!
The Lord Prophet, in nothing e'er failing,
To us, to us is he come
Through the sand-ocean sailing!
Wake the flute and the drum;
The Prophet, the Prophet is come!

ANITRA

White as milk is his steed, as the streaming
Milk-rivers in Paradise drunken.
Be bent, ev'ry knee! Ev'ry head, be sunken!
His eyes as the stars are, graciously beaming.
But the days of that man are ended
Who dares look on those star-rays so splendid!
Through the desert he came.
Gold and pearls on his breast sprang and glow'd.
It was light when he rode.
Behind was darkness and gloom;
And drought and the dread simoom.
He, all-glorious, came!
Through the desert he came;
Our body of earth, he shared it,
Kaaba's an empty name —
He himself has declared it!

CHORUS OF GIRLS

Wake the flute and the drum;
The Prophet, the Prophet is come!
(*The girls dance to soft music*)

PEER GYNT

I have read it in print — and the saying's sheer
truth —

“None’s a prophet at home, in the land of his youth.”

It’s this kind of life I’d much rather follow,
More pleasant than Charlestown shipping I find it.
In the whole of that life there was something hollow,
Something alien at bottom, something muddy behind
it —

I never felt really one of that crowd there,
My real self was always under a cloud there.
What possess me to enter that galley at all?
To grub as a trader —! I can’t comprehend it.
When I think it all over, I meet a blank wall.
It happened so; that answer must end it. —
To be yourself on a basis of gold,
Is to build your house on a sand-foundation.
For watch and ring and such signs of station
The good people fawn on you, crawl in the mud;
They lift their hats to your jewell’d stud;
But ring, stud, are not your person, I hold —
A Prophet; that’s a clear *rôle* to be filling.
You know where you stand. If you make a success,
The ovation is yours; it’s yourself they bless;
Yourself, nor your every pound-sterling and shilling.
Without any doubt then, one is what one is,
One owes nothing to Fortune’s subsidies
Nor need lean upon patents and licences —
A Prophet; yes that’s the position for me.
And the thing was so utterly unexpected. —
These children of nature I met unprotected
As over the desert I rode from the sea.
The Prophet was come; so the sure news flies.
I had n’t the slightest desire to deceive them —;
There’s a difference ’twixt lies and prophetic replies;

And I can always turn back and leave them.

I 'm not at all bound; the thing 's plain, of course —

It 's all private, to speak without reservation;

I can go, as I came; I have got my horse;

I 'm master, in short, of the situation.

ANITRA (*approaching the entrance*)

Prophet and Master!

PEER GYNT

What would my slave of me?

ANITRA

The sons of the plain at thy tent-door are near;

They pray for the light of thy countenance —

PEER GYNT

Stay!

Say to them, "Stand a long distance away;"

Say, at a distance their prayers I will hear.

Add, in here I 'll have no men to crave boons of me!

Menfolk, my child, are a rotten race —

Absolute muck indeed are they!

Anitra, you can't think, the shameless face

With which they have swin'd — have sinn'd, I say! —

Well, enough of that! Girls, you may dance for my
joy!

The Prophet would banish the thoughts that annoy.

THE GIRLS (*dancing*)

The Prophet is good; the Prophet is grieving

For the sons of the dust, their ill deeds and deceiving!

The Prophet is mild; to his mildness he praises;

To sinners the gates of his heaven he upraises!

PEER GYNT (*his eyes following Anitra during the dance*)

Legs that as swift as drumsticks can flit.

Yes, that damsel, she is a dainty bit.

True she *has* a somewhat extravagant figure —

It don't follow the laws of beauty with rigor;
But what is beauty? Convention merely;
A coin, which with changes of place can clearly
Its worth change. That man for extremes is eager,
Who's contrived from the normal its utmost to capture;

In the strictly correct one misses all rapture.
Either plump to excess or excessively meagre,
Distressingly young, or appallingly old:
With those in between are mawkish or bold. —
'T is not by their cleanliness her feet invite one;
Nor do her arms; in especial the right one.
But that is, at bottom, no derogation.
I should sooner call it a qualification —
Anitra, hearken!

ANITRA (*approaching*)

Thy slave bends her ear.

PEER GYNT

You're alluring, my child. And moved is the
Prophet.

If you do not believe me, then hearken and hear!

I'll make you a Houri! There's the proof of it.

ANITRA

It's not possible, Lord!

PEER GYNT

What? You think it's a jest?

On my life, I am serious, quite, I protest!

ANITRA

But I've not got a soul.

PEER GYNT

Well, one must be found for you.

ANITRA

How, Lord?

PEER GYNT

Just trust to me, I will be bound for
you —

I'll see you a sound education get.

No soul! Well truly you are rather stolid,

As they say, I have noticed the same with regret.

There'll be space for a soul though, it's not like a
solid.

Come here! Where's your brain-pan, let's feel the
size of it.

There is room, there is room; I'd have wagered my
eyes of it.

True enough — you will never be able to dig

Very deeply — your soul, I'm afraid, won't be
big —

But, take heart; it really will be just the same to
you —

It will be large enough not to bring any shame to
you —

ANITRA

The Prophet is good ——

PEER GYNT

Don't hesitate, girl!

ANITRA

But I'd rather ——

PEER GYNT

Come, out with it! Tell me the whole ——

ANITRA

Well, I don't care so much about having a soul —

Give me rather ——

PEER GYNT

Yes, what?

ANITRA (*pointing to his Turban*)

That beautiful pearl!

PEER GYNT (*enraptured, handing her the jewel*)

Anitra! True daughter of Eve! How you show it!

As a magnet, you draw me; for I am a man,

And as it was put by a much esteem'd poet:

“Das ewig Weibliche ziehet uns an!”

SCENE SEVEN

A moonlit night. A palm-grove outside Anitra's tent.

Peer Gynt, with an Arabian lute in his hands, sits under a tree. His beard and hair are clipped; he looks much younger.

PEER GYNT (*plays and sings*)

I lockt, I lockt my Paradise

And took the key with me.

'Fore the north wind my good ship flies!

Hark to the lovely women's cries,

Forlorn beside the sea!

Still south, my stout keel clove her way

And would the waves outstrip.

Where palm-trees, proud and lofty sway,

A wreath around the ocean-bay,

I burnt my sturdy ship.

I came aboard the desert's ship,

The ship on four legs staunch.

It foam'd beneath the lashing whip —

O! catch me! I'm a bird — I skip

And twitter on a branch!

Anitra, sap of sweetest trees
Thou art, I know it now!
Ay, ev'n Angora goat-milk cheese
My taste does not so choicely please,
Anitra, ah! as thou!

(He hangs the lute over his shoulder and comes nearer)

Stillness! Did the fair one hearken?
Has she heard my little lay?
Peeps she from where curtains darken,
Veil and so forth flung away?
Hush! a noise, as wine that 's pouring
When the cork bursts out amain!
Now again! And yet again!
Sighs or songs of love's sweet pain? —
No: it is my darling snoring —
Sweetest strain! Anitra 's sleeping!
Nightingale, now cease thy cry!
Not a woe shall pass thee by
If thou darest with songs of weeping —
As the text says, "Presently!"
Nightingale, thou'rt always singing;
Ah! and even so am I.
Thou, as I, to love art bringing
Tender little hearts that sigh.
Balmy night for song was fashion'd;
And in song one sphere we share;
We are We, in song empassion'd,
We, the nightingale and Peer.
And the slumber of the maiden
Crowns my heart with gladness laden —
This, to have my loving lip
O'er the cup — yet not a sip —!

But what 's that, I wonder? Lo!

She is coming! Better so.

ANITRA (*from the tent*)

Master, in the night art calling?

PEER GYNT

Yes, Anitra, it was I.

I was waken'd by the squalling

Of the cat, whose hunting-cry ——

ANITRA

No; no hunting made thee waken.

Something worse thy sleep hath shaken.

PEER GYNT

What then?

ANITRA

Spare me!

PEER GYNT

Speak, my girl!

ANITRA

O I blush to ——

PEER GYNT (*nearer*)

Was it, tell me,

That which suddenly befell me,

When I gave to you the pearl?

ANITRA (*horrified*)

Liken thee, earth's prize, to that

Horrible, disgusting cat!

PEER GYNT

From the standpoint, child, of passion

Cat and prophet, in a fashion,

Are n't at all dissimilar.

ANITRA

Master, how the jests are flowing

From thy lips.

PEER GYNT

My child, you 're far
Too like others, who 're for knowing
From the outside what men are.
I am full of jests at heart,
Jests like this, especially.
My position thrusts a part,
On me, of solemnity;
I have duties prejudicial,
Worry never leaves me free,
Just to plague me all agree,
So I 'm harsh as harsh can be
Sometimes; yet 't is superficial. —
Pouf! Avaunt. In *tête-à-tête* I
Am Peer. — well, I 'm he, you see.
To the prophet show the gate! I
Am myself, here you have me!
(*Sits under a tree and draws her to him*)
Come, Anitra! See, beguiling
Us to rest, the palm tree's shade!
I 'll be whisp'ring, you 'll be smiling;
An exchange, then, shall be made;
You shall whisper love, the while
At your lips I gaze and smile!

ANITRA (*lies down at his feet*)

All thy words are sweet as singing,
Though I understand but little.
If I listen, Master, it 'll
Unto me a soul be bringing?

PEER GYNT

Soul, and spirit's light, and learning
Soon in you you 'll be discerning.
When in East, each rosy-finger

Prints in gold type — Day is here —
Then at play we will not linger.
You shall have my lessons, dear.
But 'mid night's delicious quiet
I were stupid, did I try at
Practising my pedagogic
With my tatter'd bit of logic.
And the soul, of all that 's sent us,
Is not chief. As says a singer,
'T is the heart that 's most momentous.

ANITRA

Speak, O Master! As I listen
Pearls across my vision glisten!

PEER GYNT

Folly 't is to be too clever;
Cowardice in cruelty ever
Ends, and too much truth, turn'd scurvy,
Is but wisdom topsy-turvy.
Yes, my child — or I 'm a liar,
Aye, a hound, if there are not
O'er-fed souls who 'll get no nigher
To clear sight than they have got.
There was such a man — I knew him —
Not another equal to him;
He mistook his goal and calling,
Losing sense in blatant bawling. —
See the waste round this oasis?
Were I but to swing my turban,
Floods would rush that naught could curb, an
Ocean to the farthest places!
But I should a blockhead be
Thus creating land and sea.
Know you, what it is to live?

ANITRA

Teach me!

PEER GYNT

'T is yourself to give
To be wafted down time's river
As yourself — self nought can shiver.
In manhood alone I can
Be what I am, dear child, this man!
The old eagle moults his plumage,
Th' old man totters to his rheumage,
Joan's not got a tooth to bite with,
Darby, wither'd hands can't fight with —
One and all get wither'd souls.
Youth! Youth! Where's my kingdom? Mine!
I'll be Sultan, sole, supreme —
Not where Gyntiana rolls
Rivers under palm and vine —
But firm based upon the fine
Freshness of a woman's dream. —
See you now, my maiden pretty,
Why I've lured you, here's the token,
Why to you my heart has spoken,
Why I've builded my soul's city
There, my being's Caliphat.
Mine! and mine alone I call you.
For in love I'm autocrat!
Mine your every pang and bliss is.
I am he, who shall enthrall you,
As fine gold a jewel kisses.
Part we, you and I? All's over —
Here on *you* the emphasis is!
All which veil and garments cover,
Will-less, without yes or no,

Full of me, all I must know.
Midnight beauty of your tresses,
All of charm the fancy guesses,
Like the Babylonian garden,
Shall allure your body's warden.
Therefore I do not regret
That your head's a habitation
Empty; with a soul, men get
Lost, quite, in self-contemplation.
While we're talking, hark, my doxy,
You shall, if you like, you know,
Have a ring, that I can lock — see? —
Round your ankle; safer so;
I will be your soul by proxy.
For the rest — why, *status quo*.

(*Anitra snores*)

What? She sleeps! Then did it flow
Useless past her, all I've spoken?
No! 't is of my pow'r a token
That away she's carried, dreaming,
On my tales of passion streaming.
(*Rises and lays trinkets in her lap*)
There are jewels for you! There!
Sleep, Anitra! Dream of Peer. . . .
Sleep! For this your sleeping places
On your Emperor's brow the crown!
Vict'ry on his Person's basis.
Now Peer Gynt has made his own.

SCENE EIGHT

A caravan route. The oasis lies far off in the background.

Peer Gynt, on his white horse, gallops over the desert. He has Anitra in front on his saddle-bow.

ANITRA

Let be! I'll bite!

PEER GYNT

You rascal! You love!

ANITRA

What would you?

PEER GYNT

Would? Play at the hawk and
the dove!

Carry you off! Frisk about a bit, frantic!

ANITRA

For shame! An elderly prophet!

PEER GYNT

Rot!

The prophet's not elderly, silly! A lot
Of old age it betokens, this kind of antic!

ANITRA

Let me go! I'll go home!

PEER GYNT

Would you, coquette?

Home! To papa-in-law! How'd you be met?

We madcap brides, that have taken our flight,

Must never again come within his sight.

Besides, child, no wise man shows his face,

Believe me, too long in the self-same place;

Men think far less of, when they know more about
you —

As for prophets — well, quickly flags their panegyric.

One should be but a moment of joy, like a lyric.

It was time that I left. Even these things without,
you

Know, that these sons of the desert are fickle —
At the last prayers were few, and the incense a trickle.

ANITRA

Yes, but are you a prophet?

PEER GYNT

I am your King!

(*Tries to kiss her*)

Tut! my woodpecker! Is n't she quick on the wing?

ANITRA

Give me that ring that you have on your finger.

PEER GYNT

Take all the trash, my Anitra, take all!

ANITRA

Like sweet songs your words on the memory linger.

PEER GYNT

To inspire such a passion, this true bliss I call!

I'll dismount! Like a slave, I will stand at your
bridle!

(*Hands her his riding-whip and gets off*)

There now! My blossom, my rose of all roses;

I will tramp through the sand! Even I, at your
side, 'll

Trudge till a sunstroke my passion forecloses.

I *am* young, Anitra! And please don't forget it.

Don't be shocked at the way I would frolic and pet it.

Jests and high-jinks are youth's only criterion!

So you 'd see, were you quicker to grasp at the truth,

That a lover who's bent (don't, my poppet, be
dreary) on

High-jinks and jests is, *ergo*, a youth!

ANITRA

Yes, you're a youth! Have you yet got a ring or
two?

PEER GYNT

Ain't I? There! Grab! Like a buck's, there's a
fling or two!

Were there vine-leaves about, I would make me a
crown.

To be sure I am young! I will dance! Derry-down!
(*Dances and sings*)

I am the happiest game-cock!

Peck me, my little pullet!

Ha! Let me trip and fool it;

I am the happiest game-cock!

ANITRA

You are sweating, my prophet, I fear you may
melt;

Give me that heavy bag hung at your belt.

PEER GYNT

Tender solicitude! Bear the purse ever —
The lover from gold can contentedly sever.

(*Dances and sings again*)

Young Peer Gynt is a madcap!

Does n't know which foot to stand upon!

Pooh, says Peer — pooh, pooh, go on!

Young Peer Gynt is a madcap.

ANITRA

What joy to see you in the dance, O my Prophet!

PEER GYNT

A truce to the Prophet! — we've had enough of it!
Let's change clothes!

ANITRA

Your caftan's too long, and the smocking's
Of your girdle too wide, and too tight are your
stockings —

PEER GYNT

Eh bien! (Kneels)

But vouchsafe me a vehement sorrow,
To the heart of a lover is suffering sweet!

Listen! We 'll get to my tow'r—not to-morrow——

ANITRA

Your paradise — must we ride far ere we greet——?

PEER GYNT

O! a thousand miles or ——

ANITRA

Too far!

PEER GYNT

O! hear!

You shall have the soul that I promised you,
dear ——

ANITRA

Oh, thank you! I 'll get on without the soul, I.

But you asked for a sorrow ——

PEER GYNT

Yes, curse me; one, say, or two!

One short, sharp sorrow — to last but a day or two!

ANITRA

Anitra obeyeth the Prophet! — Good-bye!

(She cuts him sharply across the fingers, and dashes off at a tremendous gallop back across the desert)

PEER GYNT *(stands for a long time thunderstruck)*

Well, now may I be ——!

SCENE NINE

The same place. An hour later.

Peer Gynt, sedate and thoughtful, is stripping off his Turkish clothes bit by bit. Last of all he takes his little

travelling cap from his coat-pocket, puts it on, and stands once more in European dress.

PEER GYNT (*when he has thrown the turban far away from him*)

There lies the Turk, then, and I stand here!
These heathenish games are no good, I'm clear;
That the whole thing was only a question of dressing
Not bred in the bone, as they say, is a blessing. —
What induced me to enter that galley? Adhere
To the life of a Christian! Yes! that sound advice is;
Don't copy the peacock; remember morality;
Keep, in all of your actions, this side of legality;
Be yourself, and so earn, at the ultimate crisis,
A speech by your grave, on your tomb chaste devices.
(*Walks a few steps*)

The hussy — that girl came most horribly close
To turning my head and completely upsetting me;
I'm a troll if I know what managed to glose
And bewilder me, thus in a quandary getting me.
Well, it's good that it's done! 'T was a jest most
periculous;

And if carried on would have made me ridiculous.
I have err'd. Ah, yes — but I've this consolation,
That my error was due to the false situation.
'T was not I, in my actual person, that fell,
It was really that way of living prophetic;
It so lackt the true salt of action that — well —
It took its revenge in bad taste emetical.

To be "Prophet" 's a monstrous poor thing, on the
whole!

By your very profession you walk in a mist;
In prophetic play the opponent cries "vole"
The moment from folly and dreams you desist.

I've been equal, so far, to the situation
Merely by my giving that goose education.

But, nevertheless —— (*Bursts out laughing*)

H'm! Just think of it! Me!

To try to stop time by tripping and dancing!
And to fight with the flood by frolic and prancing!
To strum on the lute-strings, to cuddle and blether,
And to end like a game-cock — be pluckt, every
feather.

That was frenzy prophetic, verily.

Yes, pluckt! Yes, my Lord, I'm nigh pluckt to the
skin;

Well, I've still got a trifling reserve to call in;
I've got some in America, some in my pocket,
So I need n't ask yet for the poor-house's docket.
And this middle condition is best, after all.

I'm not tied to my coachman or horse; I don't bawl
For my buggy or baggage, in troubled vexation;
I am master, in short, of the situation. —

What path shall I choose, with so many? The wise is
Known from the fool by his choice at a crisis.

Business? No, that is a leaf quite turn'd over;
And a cast-off coat is my life as a lover.

To go backwards, crab-like, I've got no ambition.

“Backwards or forwards, 't is just as long;
In or out, and it's strait as strong,”

So I've read in a book of serene erudition.

I'll find something new; ennoble my life;

Find a goal that is worth the money and strife.

Shall I write out my life without dissimulation —

A book for men's guidance and imitation? —

Or, stay! — since I've got the leisured capacity,

Shall I study past ages with interest rife,

As a travelling scholar watch time's voracity?
Yes, to be sure; that is my occupation!
Why, to legends, when I was a boy, I'd be turning,
And since then I have n't dropt that side of learn-
ing. —

I will follow the road of each several nation!
I will float like a feather on history's stream,
Make it alive again, as in a dream —
See the heroes struggle for truth and right —
As an onlooker, out of the danger quite —
See the martyrs bleed and the thinkers die,
See empires founded and empires fall,
See world-epochs grow from seedlings small;
I will skim the cream of history! I! —
I must try and get hold of some ancient horology,
And travel, as far as I can, by chronology. —
Of course — I have not very sound foundations,
And "true" history deceives one and tries the
patience! —

But then! your starting-point's random — poor!
The result is original so, and new. —
To have such a goal! How uplifted I feel!
And to go straight for it, like flint and steel!
(*With quiet emotion*)
To break off all round, to put all behind one,
The bonds that to friends and hearth-stone bind
one —

One's hoarded wealth to blow up sky-high —
To love and its lures to say "Good-bye" —
Only to get a view into Truth's mystery —
(*Wiping a tear from his eye*)
That's the test of the genuine student of history! —
I feel happier than I e'er thought I could be.

Now I have found my destiny's key.

Now I've only to hold on through thick and thin.

It's excusable now if, in pride, I soar,

And know me, the man, Peer Gynt, within,

Also call'd Human-life's Emperor. —

The past shall be own'd, every minute and sod, by me;

The paths of the living shall no more be trod by
me —

'T is worth just the price of a shoe-sole, to-day is;

There is no faith in man, and futile his way is;

His soul has no wings, and for strength he's no
place —

(Shrugs his shoulders)

And women — ah! they are a rotten race!

(Goes off)

SCENE TEN

A summer day. Far up in the North. A hut in the wood. A door, with a large wooden bar, stands open. Reindeer-horns over the door. A herd of goats by the wall of the hut.

A Middle-aged Woman, fair and comely, sits and spins outside in the sunshine.

THE WOMAN *(glances down the path and sings)*

The winter may pass, and the spring may go by,

And next summer too, yes, the whole year may fly —

But one day you will come, that I know, that I know;

I will wait, for at parting I promised you so.

(Calls the goats, spins, and sings again)

God give you strength, wheresoever you roam!

God give you joy, if in heav'n you've come home!

Here I will wait, till you come again, love;

If you wait at His footstool, we'll meet there, above!

SCENE ELEVEN

In Egypt. Daybreak. Memnon's statue stands amid the sand.

Peer Gynt enters on foot and looks around him for a while.

PEER GYNT

This would be a good start from which I might range. —

I've become an Egyptian, now, for a change;

That is, on the Gyntish Ego's basis.

Next to Assyria I will make traces.

To begin right back at the world's creation,

Would simply mean trouble and extra vexation —

Round about all Bible-history I'll wander,

And find secular signs of it whereon to ponder.

To peer, as the proverb says, into the crannies,

Completely outside both my power and my plan is.

(Sits on a stone)

Here will I sit and await the habitual

Song of the statue, the old dawn-ritual.

After breakfast, the Pyramid I will climb;

And look inside too, if I've got the time.

Then I'll go where the Red Sea stretches far,

And perhaps find the grave of King Potiphar. —

Then I'll turn Asiatic. Seek Babylon,

The harlots and gardens, the world's admiration,

That's to say, the chief traces of civilization.

Then at once to the walls of Troy I'll go on.

Then from Troy there's a fairway across the sea

To where Athens stands in her ancient glory;

Then I'll see the pass, and recount the story

How Leonidas held off the enemy;

I will read up the best sort of metaphysician,
Find where Socrates suffer'd, that place of perdi-
tion;

Tut — by the bye — there's a war on at present! —
I must put off Greece till affairs are more pleasant.

(Looks at his watch)

It's really too bad, how slow at its rising
The sun is. I've not got much time. Well, then,
I will go on from Troy — it was there I was when —
(Rises and listens)

What is it, that rushing of song, most surpris-
ing ——?

[Sunrise.]

MEMNON'S STATUE *(sings)*

From the demigod's ashes,
In fresh youth are winging
Birds ever singing.
Zeus who knows all
Form'd them to brawl.
Owls of Athene,
In your sleep who has seen ye?
Read the riddle, or thou
Must die now!

PEER GYNT

Passing strange. I could really have thought there
was cast

From the statue a sound. Music, that of the
Past.

I could hear well the notes of the stone, rising,
sinking. —

I will write it, to give food for thought to the
thinking.

(Notes in his pocket-book)

“The statue did sing. ’T was the sound that I heard
of it,

For the rest, I could n’t make out ev’ry word of it.
’T was illusion, the whole thing, I need hardly say. —
Nothing else of importance observed to-day.”

(Goes away)

SCENE TWELVE

Near the village of Gizeh. The great Sphinx carved out of the rock. A long way off the spires and minarets of Cairo.

*Peer Gynt enters; he examines the Sphinx attentively, now through his eye-glass, now through his hol-
lowed hand.*

PEER GYNT

Where met I something (I half forget it),
You curious old hobgoblin, like you?
For, in the north or the south, I have met it.
Was it a person? And, if so, who?
That Memnon, the fancy afterwards came to me,
Was like the Old Man of the Dovrë, so call’d:
As he sat stiff and stark, he seem’d the same to me,
On his end, and by broken pillars wall’d.
But this most amazing of mongrel creatures,
This changeling, this lion with woman’s features —
Does it too come from a fairy-tale?
Or from something real, something I fail —
From a fairy-tale? Why — I was sure I knew him!
It’s the Boyg, whom I smote on the skull; I nigh
slew him —
That is, I dreamt I did — I had a fever. —
(Goes nearer)

The eyes just the same, lips the same as ever —
Not quite so sluggish; a bit more alluring;
But the same, after all, in matters enduring. —
So that's it, Boyg; you look like a lion,
If a day-light view one succeeds in procuring!
Are you still good at riddling? Well, again I will
try on.

Will you in the same answer, I wonder, persist? You!
(*Calls out towards the Sphinx*)

Boyg, hi! Who are you?

A VOICE (*behind the Sphinx*)

Ach, Sphinx, wer bist du?

PEER GYNT

What? Echo answers in German? How curious!

THE VOICE

Wer bist du?

PEER GYNT

Clearly its learning's not spurious!

My observation is new. I may quote it.

(*Notes in his book*)

So "Echo German; Berlin accent," I note it.

[*Begriffenfeldt comes from behind the Sphinx.*]

BEGRIFFENFELDT

A man!

PEER GYNT

O! it must have been him that I heard.

(*Notes again*)

"Something else, to upset my conclusions, occur'd."

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*with all kinds of restless antics*)

Oh! Ein Lebensfrage —! Herr! Dare I to do —
h'm?

Is there reason you're here just to-day? What is it?

PEER GYNT

I'm greeting a friend of my youth. Just a visit.

BEGRIFFENFELDT

What? The Sphinx?

PEER GYNT (*nods*)

Yes; in days gone by I knew him.

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Famous! — And that after such a night!

My brain and my brow beat away like a bell! Sir!

You know him? Speak on, then! Ah! can you tell,
sir,

What he is?

PEER GYNT

What he is? There I'll give you light.

He is himself.

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*with a leap*)

Ha! On my vision the great
Riddle of life flashes forth! Then it's certain
He's himself?

PEER GYNT

Yes, he says so, at any rate.

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Himself! Revolution! Ring up the curtain!

(*Takes his hat off*)

And your name is, dear sir?

PEER GYNT

Peer Gynt I was christen'd.

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*with rapt admiration*)

Peer Gynt! Allegoric! I might have foreseen —

Peer Gynt? The Unknown, I presume it must mean.

The Comer, whose coming was told! Ah! I listen'd —

PEER GYNT

Really? You came here to meet — You have been —

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Peer Gynt! Profound! Enigmatic! Clear!
Each word has a lesson, deep as the abyss is!
What are you?

PEER GYNT (*modestly*)

I've tried — though human to miss is —
To be myself. And I have a passport here.

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Again at the bottom that word enigmatic!
(*Seizes him by the wrist*)
Cairo! The Interpreters' Kaiser! Ecstatic!

PEER GYNT

Kaiser?

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Come on!

PEER GYNT

But am I, as the phrase is —?

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*dragging him away*)

The Interpreters' Kaiser — upon Self's basis!

SCENE THIRTEEN

In Cairo. A large courtyard, with high walls and buildings round it. Barred windows; iron cages. Three Keepers in the court. A fourth enters.

THE NEWCOMER

Schafmann; where's the director? He told me to wait now —

A KEEPER

He drove off in the morning before it was light.

THE FIRST

Something must have occur'd to annoy him, last night,
For instance —

ANOTHER

Be quiet, he's outside the gate now!
[*Begriffenfeldt leads Peer Gynt in, locks the gate and puts the key in his pocket.*]

PEER GYNT (*aside*)

Indeed, he's a man of remarkable gifts;
With each word, beyond comprehension he lifts
The subject. (*Looks around*)

So this is your Athenæum?

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Yes, every one of them, here you can see 'em —
The old group of Interpreters three score and ten,
But we've added a hundred and sixty since then —
(*Shouts to Keepers*)

Michael, Schlingelberg, Schafmann, Fuchs —
Into the cages with you! Shucks!

THE KEEPERS

We!

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Get in! Who else but you?

When the world buzzes round, we must buzz with it,
too.

(*Forces them into a cage*)

He has come on this morning, he, Peer the Great;
You can guess the rest — more I need n't state.

(*Locks the cage, and throws the key into a well*)

PEER GYNT

But, my dear Herr Doctor and Director — er —?

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Neither one nor the other. I have been — Mein Herr,
Can you keep a secret? I must ease my heart —

PEER GYNT (*with increasing uneasiness*)

What is it?

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Promise! Don't tremble, nor start!

PEER GYNT

I will try ——

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*takes him into a corner and whispers*)

The Absolute Reason quite

Departed this life at eleven last night.

PEER GYNT

God help me ——!

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Yes, it's extremely deplorable,
And to me, as I'm placed, it's especially horrible;
For this institution's been known till to-day
As a madhouse.

PEER GYNT

A madhouse!

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Till now, I say,

But no longer, you see.

PEER GYNT (*blanched, says softly*)

A madhouse! This shows it!

And this man is mad — and there's no one else
knows it!

(*Tries to steal off*)

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*follows him*)

I hope you don't misunderstand what I've stated?

When I said He was dead, I — exaggerated.

He's beside himself. Out of his skin he leapt free,

Like my comrade Münchausen's fox — do you see?

PEER GYNT

Excuse me one minute ——

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*holding him back*)

'T was an eel he was like

Not a fox, of course. Right through his eye went a spike;

He writhed on the wall ——

PEER GYNT

Oh! where can I win ——?

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Just a stick round his neck and, whip! out of his skin!

PEER GYNT

He 's utterly crazy! As mad as can be!

BEGRIFFENFELDT

'T is quite clear; 't is a fact; futile any pretence is,
This from-himself-going must have consequences;
In chief, revolution by land and sea.

Those who were call'd crazy, all became quite

Normal, at eleven o'clock last night,

In accordance with Reason's new phase. And thence
is,

If 't is rightly regarded, this my contention,

This fact too, at the hour (see above) which I
mention,

All the sane people, so call'd, went out of their senses.

PEER GYNT

You mention'd the hour. My time's short; I've
not ——

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Your time! You remind me! I'd nearly forgot!

(Opens a door and shouts)

Come! Of the new age I make proclamation!

Reason is dead. Long live Peer Gynt, shout!

PEER GYNT

Now, my dear good sir ——

[The lunatics come out, at intervals, into the court-yard.]

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Good morning! Come out!
And hail the first rays of emancipation!
Here 's your Kaiser!

PEER GYNT

Kaiser?

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Yes, Kaiser, man.

PEER GYNT

But the honour 's so great, so much out of my way —
you ——

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Ah! do not let any false modesty sway you
At a moment like this.

PEER GYNT

Give me time that I can — !
No, indeed, I 'm not fit; I 'm completely dumfounded!

BEGRIFFENFELDT

You! who have read the Sphinx's secret, astounded?
You who 're yourself?

PEER GYNT

'T is there that the haze is.
In everything I am myself, am I;
But here, if I follow you, one must try
To be outside oneself, as the phrase is.

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Outside? Now, that is a curious mistake!
Here one is oneself and can utterly sever
Everything else from oneself for ever.
Here, full sail, as ourselves, our course we make.
Each in the barrel of self down plunges
And ferments, and soon all but self expunges;
And seals, with self's bung, self's citadel,

And seasons the staves in self's deep well.
No one has tears for the other's disasters;
What the other's ideas are, no one masters.
Ourselves, that we are in thought and tone,
Ourselves, to the spring-board's uttermost verge —
And so, if a Kaiser's to mount the throne,
You are the very man, I urge.

PEER GYNT

Oh! would that the devil —— !

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Now don't be downhearted;
Nearly all things in nature are new when they're
started.

"Oneself!" — Come, you shall an example see;
I'll choose out at random the first to be had. —

(*Beckons to a gloomy figure*)

Good-day, Huhu! Well, are you wandering, my lad,
Always with the imprint of misery?

HUHU

Yes! Without interpretations
The people die, by generations. (*To Peer Gynt*)
You're a stranger: will you hear?

PEER GYNT (*bowing*)

Certainly!

HUHU

Then lend an ear —
Eastward, far as travel reaches,
Lie the Malabarish beaches.
Dutch and Portuguese surrounded
Them with culture quite unbounded.
Also in the same land there is
Plenty of pure Malabaris.
These too spoil the people's speech, as

Well as lord it o'er the beaches.
But their land, in years of old, it
Was the orang-outang controll'd it.
In the forest none him better'd;
There he fought and snarl'd unfetter'd.
Just as Nature had created
Him, so grinn'd he and so hated.
He could shriek unreprehended;
For his kingdom none contended. —
Then the foreign joke (O evil
Day!) quite spoil'd the speech primeval.
Centuries four, without cessation
Night ruled o'er the monkey nation.
Nights so long, you know, are found to
Hide the goal a people's bound to. —
Forest's primal notes are still now;
Growls the air no longer fill now,
If we wish our thoughts to utter
We in feeble words must stutter!
This constraint is really much too
Rigid; Portuguese and Dutch, too,
Half-caste races, Malabaris —
On them all it most unfair is. —
I have tried to raise th' ideal
Of our primal speech, the real —
Tried to raise the corpse, by seeking
Proofs to show the right of shrieking,
Shriekt myself, and tried to show it
Needful, as the people's poet. —
Through neglect my efforts languish. —
Now, I trust, you grasp my anguish.
Thanks, for lending me an ear;
Have you counsel, let me hear!

PEER GYNT (*softly*)

It is written: best be howling
With the wolves around you yowling. (*Aloud*)
Trees, sir, to my recollection,
In Morocco give protection
To orang-outangs, quite lacking
Either bard's or spokesman's backing;
Their speech sounded Malabarish!
It was pleasing yet not garish —
Have you thought of emigrating?
There's a way to serve your state in —

HUHU

Thanks for lending me an ear, sir;
I will do it without fear, sir. (*With a large gesture*)
East! Thou hast disown'd thy singer!
In the West oranges still linger. (*He goes*)

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Well, was he himself? I should think so — wholly.
He's chock full of his own affairs simply and solely.
He's himself in all that out of him flows, —
He's himself because he beside himself goes.
Come here! I've another to show, who agrees, on
Everything now, since last night, with Reason.
(*To a Fellah, carrying a mummy on his back*)
King Apis! how art thou, whom all realms obey, sir?

THE FELLAH (*wildly to Peer Gynt*)

Am I King Apis?

PEER GYNT (*getting behind the doctor*)

Well, I don't like to say, sir;
I'm not quite at home in the situation;
But your tone might be a justification —

THE FELLAH

Now you're lying, too.

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Oh! your Highness before — I
Should explain how things are.

THE FELLAH

I will tell him my story.

(Turns to Peer Gynt)

Do you see what I have on my shoulders?

He was named Apis and King.

Now he goes by the name of mummy,

And is dead as anything.

He built all the Pyramids yonder,

And hew'd out the mighty Sphinx,

And fought, as the Doctor puts it,

With the Turks, both rechts and links.

And therefore the whole of Egypt

Hail'd him god and bountiful,

And put him up in the temples

In the likeness of a bull. —

But I am this same King Apis

I see that as clear as day;

And if you don't understand it,

Very soon understand it you may.

One day King Apis dismounted

When he was out on the chase,

And withdrew himself, unattended,

To a part of my ancestor's place.

But the field that King Apis fatten'd

Has nourisht me with its corn;

If additional proofs are wanted,

I have an invisible horn.

Is it not, now, a cruel disaster

That no one will own my might?

I'm Apis by birth, Egypt's master,

But a Fellah in others' sight.
Can you tell me what I should do now?
If you have advice, kindly state.
The problem is, how to make me
Like to King Apis the great.

PEER GYNT

You had better build pyramids, Highness,
And hew out a mightier Sphinx,
And fight, as the Doctor puts it,
With the Turks both rechts and links.

THE FELLAH

H'm, that is a pretty story!
A Fellah! A brother to lice!
I who can scarce keep my hovel
Free from the rats and mice.
Quick, man — think out something better
That 'll make me both safe and great,
And exactly like to King Apis,
Whom my shoulders carry in state!

PEER GYNT

Suppose you hang'd yourself, Highness,
And then, in earth's lap lying,
'Twixt the coffin's natural frontiers,
Kept as dead as anything?

THE FELLAH

I'll do it! My life for a halter;
On the gallows high I will sway! —
'T will be a bit strange to start with,
But time will smooth that away.
(*Goes off and prepares to hang himself*)

BEGRIFFENFELDT

There's a personality for you, Herr Peer —
A man with a method —

PEER GYNT

Yes, yes; I'm aware.

But he'll hang himself verily! God! Be gracious!

I feel ill — I can't control thoughts pertinacious —!

BEGRIFFENFELDT

'T is a state of transition; 't will soon disappear.

PEER GYNT

Transition? To what? Pray — I must leave
here ——

BEGRIFFENDFELDT (*holding him*)

Are you mad?

PEER GYNT

Oh! not yet. Mad? God forbid it!

[*A commotion. The Minister Hussein pushes through
the crowd.*]

HUSSEIN

They tell me a Kaiser has come here to-day.

(*To Peer Gynt*)

Is it you?

PEER GYNT (*in desperation*)

Yes, of course! It can't be kept hid, it

Seems plain.

HUSSEIN

Good! There are notes to write, eh?

PEER GYNT (*tearing his hair*)

Huzza! Right there; the madder, the better!

HUSSEIN

I hope you will take a dip here, for your letter.

(*Bowing deeply*)

I am a pen.

PEER GYNT (*bowing still deeper*)

Then I am (let 's tell 'em!)

A trumpery piece of imperial vellum.

HUSSEIN

My story can briefly be put in a word:

I'm a pen, and they call me a pounce-box, my lord.

PEER GYNT

My story, put briefly, Sir Pen, is a light one —

I'm a blank sheet of paper that no one will write on.

HUSSEIN

What I am good for, none will understand;

They all try to use me for scattering sand.

PEER GYNT

Once a woman's silver-claspt book was Peer Gynt —
Whether mad or sane, 't is the same misprint!

HUSSEIN

Fancy; what an agonised life;

To be Pen and ne'er have a taste of the knife!

PEER GYNT (*with a high leap*)

Fancy; a reindeer; from high hills to bound —

To fall — and your hoofs never come to the ground!

HUSSEIN

A knife! I am blunt — quick, make a new end to me!

The world is in ruins, if none acts like a friend to me!

PEER GYNT

'T would be vastly sad for the world, that it would,

Which God said, like other self-made things, was good.

BEGRIFFENFELDT

Here 's a knife!

HUSSEIN (*seizing it*)

To lick ink! No tongue can utter

What a rapture to cut oneself! (*Cuts his throat*)

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*stepping aside*)

Do not splutter.

PEER GYNT (*in increasing horror*)

Hold him!

HUSSEIN

Hold me! That's the word that is wanted!
Hold! Hold the pen! On the desk should be planted
Paper —! (*Falls*)

I'm worn-out. P.S. 't is decided
He lived and he died as a pen fate-guided!

PEER GYNT (*dizzy*)

What shall I —? What am I? Great — Help is
bespoke!

I am all that thou wilt — a Turk, sinner, bad —
A hill troll — but help — there was something that
broke.

(*Shrieks*)

I can't now remember the name I invoke! —
Help me, thou — O Protector of all the mad!

(*Sinks down in a swoon*)

BEGRIFFENFELDT (*with a wreath of straw in his hand,
gives a leap and sits astride him*)

In the mire enthroned we see him!

Beside himself —! Now crown him there!

(*Puts the wreath on him and shouts*)

Hail! Self-hood's Kaiser! Honor we him!

SCHAFMANN

(*In the cage*)

Es lebe hoch der grosse Peer!

END OF FOURTH ACT

THE FIFTH ACT

SCENE ONE

On board a ship in the North Sea, off the Norwegian coast. Sunset. Stormy weather.

Peer Gynt, a sturdy old man, with grizzled hair and beard, stands aft by the poop. He is dressed half-sailor fashion, in a pea-jacket and long boots. His clothing is somewhat the worse for wear; he himself is weather-beaten, and has a harder expression. The Ship's Captain is beside the steersman at the wheel. The Crew are forward.

PEER GYNT (*leans his arms on the bulwarks, and gazes towards the land*)

Look at Hallingskarv, drest for the winter! Oh!

He swaggers it brave in the evening glow.

His brother, the Jökle, 's behind on a cantle;

He still wears on his back his green ice-mantle.

The Folgefånn, too, she is fine and bright,

Lying there, like a maiden, in perfect white.

Don't you start, old lads, any madcap play!

Stand where you stand, granite stern and gray.

THE CAPTAIN (*shouts forward*)

Two hands to the wheel — and aloft show a light!

PEER GYNT

It blows stiff.

THE CAPTAIN

We 'll have a storm ere night.

PEER GYNT

Can one make out the Rondë Hills from the sea?

THE CAPTAIN

Why no, man — right back o' the snowfields they be.

PEER GYNT

Or Blahö?

THE CAPTAIN

No; but from up in the rigging
You can see, in clear weather, Galdhöpiggen.

PEER GYNT

Which way is Härteig?

THE CAPTAIN (*pointing*)

Just there, or nearly.

PEER GYNT

Of course.

THE CAPTAIN

You know the coast here, clearly?

PEER GYNT

When I left the country, we sailed this way,
And the dregs stick tight till the last, they say.
(*Spits and gazes at the coast*)

Over there, in the blue of screes and crannies —
Where the valleys, black, narrow as ditches, go —
And right on the edge of the fiord, below —
It is there the abiding place of man is.

(*Looks at the Captain*)

They build far apart in this country.

THE CAPTAIN

True;

The dwellings are far between and few.

PEER GYNT

Shall we get in by daybreak?

THE CAPTAIN

I think we might,
If we don't get a regular storm in the night.

PEER GYNT

It grows thick in the west.

THE CAPTAIN

It does so.

PEER GYNT

Stay!

When we settle things up, you might put me in
mind —

As the phrase is, to do a good turn I'm inclined,
Help the crew —

THE CAPTAIN

Thank you!

PEER GYNT

Nothing much, by the way.
I have digg'd for gold, and lost what I found —
Fate and I are enemies, down to the ground.
You know what I've got, safe below, on board.
That's all; the fiend took the rest of my hoard.

THE CAPTAIN

It's enough to make you highly respected
At home.

PEER GYNT

I've no family. He's not expected,
The rich old curmudgeon, by any one here. —
Well, so one escapes the scene on the pier!

THE CAPTAIN

Here is the storm.

PEER GYNT

Well, bear in mind —

If any 's in real need, by your judging,
I'll help; with my money I'll not be grudging.

THE CAPTAIN

That 's handsome. They 're most of them poor,
you 'll find;
They all have got wives and children to feed.
Things go hard with a man on naught but his
earnings;
Should he come home with extra, of all his returnings
'T will be one that will not be forgotten with speed.

PEER GYNT

Wives have they, and children? What 's this are
you saying?
Are they married?

THE CAPTAIN

Married? Yes, the whole fo'c'sle.
The worst-off 's the cook for, laughing at locks, ill
Famine is ever at his house staying.

PEER GYNT

Married? They 've folks at home then to meet them?
When they come, there are folks to be glad at the
sight?

THE CAPTAIN

Of course, in poor folk's way.

PEER GYNT

And come they one night,
What then?

THE CAPTAIN

Why the good wife will be there to greet them
And fetch something good.

PEER GYNT

And a light?

THE CAPTAIN

May be two;
And for supper a dram of some hot drink will brew.

PEER GYNT

And they sit there so snug! And it's warm by the
ingle!

How they chatter as with them their children mingle!
There is none hears another right out to the end,
For the joy that is on them! —

THE CAPTAIN

I daresay that's true.
And therefore it's handsome of you to befriend —
As you promised to ——

PEER GYNT

May I be damn'd if I do!
Do you think I am mad? Would you have me fork
out
For the children of folk I care nothing about?
I've slaved far too hard at my money-collecting!
Poor old Peer Gynt there is no one expecting.

THE CAPTAIN

Well, well, as you please; your money's your own,
sir.

PEER GYNT

Right! It is mine; and mine alone, sir.
We'll reckon, as soon as you've let down your
anchor,
Whatever the fare is from Panama here.
Then rum round to the crew. Nothing more; never
fear,

I'll no more, or right on my jaw give a spanker!

THE CAPTAIN

I owe you a quittance and never a thrashing —

But pardon — the storm to a fury is lashing.

[He goes forward. It has come over dark; lights are lit in the cabin. The sea grows. Fog and thick clouds.]

PEER GYNT

At home a whole bevy of youngsters expecting
you;

Always with joy in their hearts recollecting you;
To have other's thoughts follow you still on your
way —

There's never a soul thinks of me to-day —
Lights for to greet them? Lights! I will quench
them.

I will hit upon something! With liquor I'll drench
them;

Not one of the beasts shall go sober ashore.

Drunk home to their children and wives they shall
stumble!

They shall curse; bang the board till the glasses
tumble,

They shall scare those that wait for them! Aye, and
more,

Right out of the house shall the good wife run
screaming. —

Clutching her children! Their joy shatter'd dream-
ing!

*(The ship gives a heavy lurch; he staggers and keeps
up with difficulty)*

That's a good old buffet, a blow like a caber's:

The sea might be paid, so hard are his labors;

He's still himself here in the North, as of old;

A cross sea, a crooked and wrong-headed scold. —

(Listens)

What is it — those screams —?

THE WATCH (*forward*)

A wreck a-lee!

THE CAPTAIN (*amidships, orders*)

Starboard your helm! Keep her to!

THE MATE

Can you say,

Are there men on the wreck?

THE WATCH

I can see three!

PEER GYNT

Quick with the stern-boat ——

THE CAPTAIN

She 'd fill straight away.

(*Goes forward*)

PEER GYNT

Who can think of that? (*To some of the crew*)

If you are men, try and save them!

What the devil, the waves and a wetting, just brave
them ——

THE BOATSWAIN

It cannot be thought of in such a sea.

PEER GYNT

They are screaming again! There 's a lull in the wind
now ——

Cook, I will pay you — come, quick, show your kind
now ——

THE COOK

Not if twenty pounds sterling were offer'd to me ——

PEER GYNT

You dogs! Chicken-hearted! Can you forget
These men have wives, children at home? Oh! and
yet ——

They sit and they wait ——

THE BOATSWAIN

Patience's good for the wits.

THE CAPTAIN

Bear away from the breakers!

THE MATE

She's going! She splits!

PEER GYNT

All is silent ——?

THE BOATSWAIN

And even now, were you right,
In the world there are three new-made widows
to-night.

[*The storm increases. Peer Gynt moves away aft.*]

PEER GYNT

There is no faith left among men now — and there's
No Christianity, 't is true what they write;
Men do little good; and how scanty their pray'rs,
And how small their respect for Supernal Might. —
In a storm, like this is, the Lord's a real danger.
These beasts should take care, think what's true
without saying,

That with elephants it is but risky playing —

Yet quite openly they must arouse his anger!

I am guiltless quite; there, for the oblation,

I'll prove, with cash ready, I took my station.

What does that profit me? — Well, as the phrase is:
A clear conscience a pillow of comfort is.

That's all right on dry land; but quite other the
case is

On the high seas here where the wind the waves
chases,

When a decent man's out with a rabble like this.

One never can be one's self at sea;

One must follow the rest, a-port, a-lee;
If for them this should be the hour that is
chosen,
I'll be dasht to the deuce with the cook and the
bo'sun;
One's personal welfare is clean set aside;
One counts but as a sausage at slaughtering-tide —
My mistake is, my conduct has been too meek.
And I've had no thanks in the end to reward it.
Were I younger, a different plan I would seek,
And try for a time to swagger and lord it.
There's time still! The parish a-fluster shall be!
Come

Running to see Peer high over the sea come!
I will get back the homestead by hook or by crook;
I'll rebuild, till as fine as a palace it look.
But I'll have none inside in the rooms! All the
chaps
Shall stand in the gateway, twirling their caps;
They shall beg and beseech — that they may do, for
me;
Not a farthing of mine, though, shall one of them
see;
If I've had to howl under Fate's sharp lashes,
I'll find folks in my turn — and then down the whip
crashes —

A STRANGE PASSENGER (*stands in the darkness at Peer Gynt's side and greets him as a friend*)

Good evening!

PEER GYNT

Good evening! What —— ? Who may you be?

THE PASSENGER

At your service, your fellow passenger.

PEER GYNT

Indeed! I thought I was the only one, sir.

THE PASSENGER

A mistake, which is now corrected, you see.

PEER GYNT

But it's singular that for the first time to-night
I should see you ——

THE PASSENGER

I never come out in the light.

PEER GYNT

You're ill, then? You look like a sheet, just as
white ——

THE PASSENGER

No, thanks. I'm uncommonly fit and right.

PEER GYNT

What a storm!

THE PASSENGER

Yes, sir, a blessed, God-given —— !

PEER GYNT

Blessed?

THE PASSENGER

The seas high as houses are running.

How one's mouth waters! To-night, the wrecks,
stunning

And deafening, along the coast will be riven;

And think, how the corpses ashore will be driven!

PEER GYNT

Lord save us!

THE PASSENGER

Have you ever seen a man choked
Or hang'd — or drowned?

PEER GYNT

Too far you have joked.

THE PASSENGER

The corpses all laugh. But their laughter's constrain'd;
And the most part are biting their tongues, as tho' pain'd.

PEER GYNT

Leave me ——!

THE PASSENGER

Your pardon, just one question more!
If we, for example, should now run ashore
And sink in the dark.

PEER GYNT

You think that we may?

THE PASSENGER

I really don't know what I ought to say.
But suppose that you sink, and I come up, lonely.

PEER GYNT

Oh, rubbish ——

THE PASSENGER

It is a hypothesis only,
But when a man stands with one foot in the grave,
He grows open-handed, would avoid seeming hateful ——

PEER GYNT (*feeling in his pocket*)

Oh! money!

THE PASSENGER

No; no; but if you gave
Your esteem'd carcass to me, I would be grateful ——?

PEER GYNT

This is too much!

THE PASSENGER

It's only your body, I pray you!
And that's for my work of research ——

PEER GYNT

Get away! You!

THE PASSENGER

But, my dear sir, consider — 't will be to your
profit!

I'll open you, then we will know the truth of it.
What I specially seek is the seat of dreams —
And critically I will look at your seams ——

PEER GYNT

Go away from me!

THE PASSENGER

But, my dear sir — a drown'd body ——

PEER GYNT

Blasphemer! You're goading the storm to be bloody!
It's really too bad! Here it's raining and blowing,
A high sea, and all kinds of signs that are
showing

There's something that comes for our death or our
chastening;

And you, by your talk, will insist on its hastening!

THE PASSENGER

You're in no mood for further negotiations,
But time, you know, brings so many mutations ——
(*Nods in friendly wise*)

We will meet when you're sinking, if not before!
Then by my proposals you may set more store.
(*Goes into the cabin*)

PEER GYNT

What dismal companions, these scientists! So
Free-thinking and ——

(*To the Boatswain, who is passing*)

Friend, a word with you! Oh!

That passenger? What asylum has been his nurse?

THE BOATSWAIN

There's no passenger here but yourself, is there?

PEER GYNT

No others? This thing's getting worse and worse.

(*To the Ship's Boy, who comes out of the cabin*)

Who went down the companion just now?

THE BOY

Ship's dog, Sir! (*Passes on*)

THE LOOK-OUT (*shouts*)

Land close ahead!

PEER GYNT

Oh! my box! My safe! How —?

All the baggage on deck!

THE BOATSWAIN

We have more to do now.

PEER GYNT

It was nonsense, captain! Just chaff! I swear

I will help the cook; yes, I pledge my wits —

THE CAPTAIN

The jib's blown away!

THE MATE

And the foresail goes! There!

THE BOATSWAIN (*screams from forward*)

Breakers under the bow!

THE CAPTAIN

She'll go to bits!

[*The ship strikes. Noise and confusion.*]

SCENE TWO

Close by the land, among rocks and breakers. The ship sinks. In the scud, the jolly-boat can be seen, with two men in her. A sea strikes and fills her; she capsizes; a shriek is heard; then all is silent for a time. Shortly after the boat comes bottom upwards.

Peer Gynt rises to the surface near the boat.

PEER GYNT

Help! Lord! A boat! I'm drowning! Oh!

Save me —! How does the scripture go?

(Clutches on the boat's keel)

THE COOK *(rises on the other side)*

Lord! For my babes' sakes, stretch Thine hand!

Have mercy! Fetch me safe to land!

(Seizes hold of the keel)

PEER GYNT

Let go!

THE COOK

Let go!

PEER GYNT

I'll strike!

THE COOK

So'll I!

PEER GYNT

With kicks I'll crush you utterly!

Let go! The boat will not float both!

THE COOK

No. Yield!

PEER GYNT

Yield!

THE COOK

You can take your oath!

[They fight; one of the Cook's hands is disabled; he clings on with the other.]

PEER GYNT

Off with that hand!

THE COOK

Oh! Kind Sir — spare!

Think of my babes, a-waiting there!

PEER GYNT

I need my life far more than you,
For I am childless still.

THE COOK

Nay! do ——

Let go! You 've lived; and I am young!

PEER GYNT

Quick, sink — your weight too long has hung ——

THE COOK

Have mercy! Yield in God's name yet!

There's none to miss you nor regret —

(He screams and slips)

I'll drown ——!

PEER GYNT *(seizes him)*

I'll hold you by the hair;

Say an "Our Father"; quick, to pray'r!

THE COOK

I can't remember — ; dark clouds cover ——!

PEER GYNT

Quick, the essentials! Get it over ——!

THE COOK

Give us this day!

PEER GYNT

Oh, let that be!

You 'll get all *you* need, certainly.

THE COOK

Give us this day ——

PEER GYNT

The same old song!

'T is plain you 've been a cook for long ——

[*The Cook slips from his grasp.*THE COOK (*sinking*)Give us this day our —— (*Disappears*)

PEER GYNT

Amen, friend!

You were yourself right to the end ——

(*Pulls himself up on the boat*)

While there is life, there 's hope, say I ——

THE STRANGE PASSENGER (*catches hold of the boat*)

Good morning!

PEER GYNT

Hey!

THE PASSENGER

I heard you cry! ——

'T is good again to meet with you.

Well? So my prophecy came true?

PEER GYNT

Let go! 'T will scarce serve one, this boat!

THE PASSENGER

I 'm swimming too. And I can float

If I have but my finger-tips,

So, on this ledge to guard off slips.

But à propos your body ——

PEER GYNT

Peace!

THE PASSENGER

The rest, of course, is done for ——

PEER GYNT

Cease!

No more!

THE PASSENGER

Just as you like. (*Silence*)

PEER GYNT

Well? Well!

THE PASSENGER

I 'm silent.

PEER GYNT

Satan's tricks of hell! —

What do you?

THE PASSENGER

Wait.

PEER GYNT (*tearing his hair*)

I 'll lose my wits.

What are you?

THE PASSENGER (*nodding*)

Friendly.

PEER GYNT

What else?

THE PASSENGER

It's

For you to think. Know you none other
Like me?

PEER GYNT

The devil, or his brother!

THE PASSENGER (*softly*)

Across life's night holds he a lamp
For mortals who through horror tramp?

PEER GYNT

Come then, when things are seen aright,
You are a messenger of light?

THE PASSENGER

Friend — have you known twice in a year
The clutch of earnest dread and fear?

PEER GYNT

One fears, when one towards risk has slidden;
But in your words lie meanings hidden —

THE PASSENGER

Ay, have you once in life e'er known
The vict'ry dread gives — dread alone?

PEER GYNT (*looks at him*)

Came you to open me a door,
'T was stupid not to come before.
Now I'm half-drown'd — what rhyme or reason
Was there in choosing such a season?

THE PASSENGER

Would victory have likelier been
Beside your hearthstone, snug, serene?

PEER GYNT

Perhaps not — but your talk was droll;
How could you think 't would stir the soul?

THE PASSENGER

Where I come from, pathetic style's
No more esteemed than jests and smiles.

PEER GYNT

All has its time; the old text I fish up —
What suits the broker damns the Bishop.

THE PASSENGER

They who've gone thro' incineration
On week-days must have relaxation.

PEER GYNT

Be off, you bugbear! Loose that hand!
I will not die! I will reach land!

THE PASSENGER

Don't be afraid, you 'll keep alive!
One dies not midmost of Act Five. (*Glides away*)

PEER GYNT

That shows, at last, his nature's twist!
He was a sorry moralist.

SCENE THREE

Churchyard in a high-lying mountain parish.

A Funeral. Priest and People. The last verse of the Psalm is being sung. Peer Gynt is passing by on the road.

PEER GYNT (*at the gate*)

Here 's a countryman going the way of us all.
God be thank't, that it is n't my funeral.
(*Enters the churchyard*)

THE PRIEST (*speaking beside the grave*)

Now that the soul's been summoned to its God,
And here the dust lies, like an empty pod,
Now, my dear friends, we 'll speak a word upon
The life on this earth of the man who's gone.
Wealth was not his, wisdom he had no share in,
He had a quiet voice, unmanly bearing,
His views were undecided, if he spoke;
He scarce was master of his home and folk;
He sidled into church, as he were saying,
"May I have leave to join you in your praying?"
He came, you know, from Gudbrandsdale, unbidden.
When here he settled, he was but a lad;

And you remember, how he always had
His right hand thrust deep in his pocket hidden.
That right hand in the pocket, to my thinking,
Stamp't the man's picture firmly on the mind —
And beside that his writhing, his shamed shrinking,
Where'er he went, from notice of his kind.
But though his path was still aloof and lonely,
Though in our midst he was a stranger still,
You know, what he so wanted to conceal —
The hand he cover'd, had four fingers only. —
I well remember, many years ago,
One morn: at Lundë there were held assizes.
It was in war time, and the country's crisis
Was in all mouths, and what the fates might show.
I watcht there. At the table, in between
Bailiff and sergeants was the Captain sitting;
Then they were measuring up and down, admitting
Lad after lad as soldiers. From the green,
Where the young folk were all together singing,
Into the crowded room, swept laughter ringing.
A name was call'd. Another came; and, lo!
He was as white as is the glacier-snow.
He was call'd nearer; at the last the table
Reacht; his right hand was swaddled in a clout;
He gasp'd, he swallow'd, strove for words — unable
To find his voice, though bidden to speak out.
Ah, yes, at last; with words that now would
linger,
Now rush apace, with cheeks all flaming-red,
He mumbled of a scythe that slipp'd, he said,
And shore, by chance, right to the skin, his finger.
Straight o'er the room a sudden silence stole.
Men made mouths, bandied glances, and the whole

Room stoned the lad with looks. He could not flee it;
He felt the hail-storm, though he did not see it.
Then rose the grey old Captain, spat, and so
Pointed without the door and thunder'd: "Go!"
And the lad went. All there fell back before him,
So that he ran the gauntlet through that throng;
He found the door; fled, and his anguish strong
Up, ever up, through woods, o'er hillsides bore him,
Up, o'er the crags that threaten still to tumble,
Among the hills he had his homestead humble. —
With mother and betrothed and child, one day
Some six months later here we saw him wander.
He leased some ground up on the hillside yonder
Where towards Lomb the waste land sweeps away.
He married soon as it was possible;
He built a house; broke the stern soil; and well
He fared, as many an acre bravely told
Bearing its generous load of waving gold.
At church he ever kept his right hand hidden —
Ah! but at home! His fingers nine would then,
I'm sure, work just as hard as others' ten. —
One spring, and all beneath the flood had slidden.
Their lives were spared them. Stript of all, in
ruin,
He set to work to make another clearing,
And, ere the autumn, a new farm-house grew in
Another spot, in shelter safe appearing.
Shelter'd? From flood, indeed; from landslide, no!
Two years, and all was swallow'd by the snow.
Yet by the landslide was his soul unshaken;
He dug, he raked, carted and cleared the ground —
And ere next winter's blasting snows could waken,
For the third time his little house stood sound.

Three sons he had, three active boys and merry;
And they must go to school, and school was far;
They 'd have to climb, where snows the hill-path bury,
And where the narrow, trembling passes are.
What did he do? The eldest boy was ready
To do his best, and where the pass sheer'd black,
His father tied a rope round him to steady;
The other two he bore on arms and back.
Thus, year by year he toil'd, till they were men.
Some slight return he might have lookt for, then.
In the New World three prosperous attorneys
Forget their Norse, their father and those journeys.
He was short-sighted. Still a ring was bounding
His vision; only those near him he saw.
To him seem'd meaningless, as cymbals sounding,
Words that should ring, and touch the heart with awe.
His race, his country, all that 's high and bright,
Stood shrouded in a mist to this man's sight.
But he was humble, humble; and he came
From the assizes by his doom fear-ridden,
As surely as his cheeks were flushed with shame
And his four fingers in his pocket hidden. —
He sinn'd against the law of the land? Ay, true!
But there is something tops the law, outshining,
Sure as o'er yonder snow-white mountain do
The clouds, like higher peaks, on peaks reclining.
He was no patriot. Dead as a barren tree is
For Church and State. But on his mountain shelf
There, 'mid his circle small, where he could see his
Work, he was strong, because he was himself.
Up to the end, that native note rang right.
A lute with silent strings to him was given.
Peace to thee, thou who quietly has striven,

Fighting and falling in the peasant's fight!
It is not ours to search the heart and reins;
That's not dust's task, but His who dust sustains;
Yet what I hope I'll speak out firm and free:
Scarce crippled now before his God stands he!
[*The gathering disperses. Peer Gynt remains behind alone.*]

PEER GYNT

Now that's what I call Christianity!
There was nothing to bring to one disconsolation. —
Aye, the topic — stand firm on a self-foundation —
That the good priest taught in his homily —
Is full, in its essence, of edification.

(*Looks down into the grave*)

Was it he, that I watcht one day a-hacking
His finger, when logs in the wood I was stacking?
Who knows? If I weren't standing here by the
grave

Of my comrade in spirit, here, with my stave,
I could almost believe it was I that slept
And heard, in a dream, with what praise I was
wept. —

It's a decent and Christian-like thing to do
To take a so-call'd memorial view
In charity over the one that's departed.
When I'm to be buried, I'd not be down-hearted
If this excellent priest was to do the rest.
Ah! well, I've some time still; the sexton's not
started

To send out his note to ask me as his guest;
And, as Scripture has it: What's best is best —
For the day, enough the day's evil things call —
And further: discount not thy funeral. —

Ah! the Church is the comforter! To her is owing
Our thanks, though I've not realized it as yet;
But now I feel, what a true blessing we get
In having a sound authority showing:
That your reaping shall be in accord with your
sowing. —

One must be oneself; for oneself and one's kin
In all do one's best, through thick and thin.
Should luck go against you, you've this to your
glory;

The doctrine has guided your whole life-story. —
Now home! Though the path be steep and strait;
Though Fate to the end should spite my endeavour;
our;

Still old Peer Gynt will go his own gait
And remain what he is: poor, but virtuous ever.
(*He goes*)

SCENE FOUR

A slope with a dried-up river-bed. A tumble-to-bits mill-house beside the river; the ground is torn up, and the whole place is in ruins. Higher up a large farm-house.

In front of the farm-house an auction is being held. Many people are gathered. There are drinking and uproar.

Peer Gynt is sitting on a rubbish heap by the mill.

PEER GYNT

Backwards and forwards, 't is just as long;
In and out, and it's strait as strong. —
The river wears on, and time wastes drear.
Roundabout, said the Boyg; one must go round here.

A MAN DRESSED IN MOURNING

Now there is nothing but rubbish to stir.

(Catches sight of Peer Gynt)

Are there strangers here, too? God be with you,
dear sir!

PEER GYNT

Well met! Things are merry to-day, I see.

A bride-feast or christening jollity?

THE MAN IN MOURNING

Rather a house-warming, I should have said;

The bride is laid in a wormy bed.

PEER GYNT

The worms squabble for rags and clouts that
cover ——

THE MAN IN MOURNING

That 's the end of the ditty, so all is over.

PEER GYNT

All the ditties end so, that 's truth;

And they all are old; I knew them in youth.

A LAD OF TWENTY *(with a casting-ladle)*

Just see what a priceless thing I 've bought!

In this Peer Gynt silver buttons wrought.

ANOTHER

Look at mine? A groat got the money-sack!

A THIRD

No more? Twopence, say, for the pedlar's pack?

PEER GYNT

Peer Gynt? Who was he?

THE MAN IN MOURNING

Well, he was kith,

That I know, to Death and to Aslak the Smith.

A MAN IN GREY

You 've forgot me, I say! Are you drunk or mad?

THE MAN IN MOURNING

You've forgot that Hegstad a stable-door had.

THE MAN IN GREY

Aye, true, but we know you were never fastidious.

THE MAN IN MOURNING

If only she does n't deceive Death the hideous.

THE MAN IN GREY

Come, kinsman! For kinship's sake, take just a drop!

THE MAN IN MOURNING

To hell with your kinship! With drink you're a slop ——

THE MAN IN GREY

Oh, rubbish; I'm sure blood is not so thin,
One cannot help feeling to Peer Gynt akin.
(*Goes away with him*)

PEER GYNT (*softly*)

One meets with acquaintances.

A LAD (*shouts after The Man in Mourning*)

Aslak, think!

Sure, mother will haunt you, if you have a drink.

PEER GYNT (*rises*)

Untrue, in this case, what the husbandmen tell,
is;

The deeper one harrows, the better the smell is.

A LAD (*with a bearskin*)

Look, the cat of the Dovrë! Well, what he kept
warm in.

It was he, who at Yule, gave the trolls such a
storming.

ANOTHER (*with a Reindeer-skull*)

Here is the wonderful reindeer that bore
Peer Gynt when o'er edge and crag they tore.

A THIRD (*with a hammer, calls out to The Man in Mourning*)

Hi, Aslak, were you ever this sledge-hammer swinging?

Was it used, when the fiend through the wall went winging?

A FOURTH (*empty handed*)

Mads, here's the invisible cloak, see! wherewith Ingrid and Peer fled; and flew through the air with.

PEER GYNT

Brandy there, boys! I feel old! — My trumpery I will put up at auction with trash and frumpery!

A LAD

What have you to sell, eh?

PEER GYNT

A palace, there!

It lies in the Rondë; it is built four-square.

A LAD

A button is bid!

PEER GYNT

Come, make it a quart.

'T were a sin and a shame to bid anything short.

ANOTHER

He's a jolly old boy, this! (*People crowd round him*)

PEER GYNT (*shouts*)

Granë, my horse —

Who bids?

ONE OF THE CROWD

Where's he running?

PEER GYNT

Far west is his course.

Near the sunset, my lads! He's as quick at flying,
Is that charger of mine, as Peer Gynt was at lying.

VOICES

What more have you got?

PEER GYNT

Gold and trash as well!

I bought it with ruin — at a loss I will sell.

A LAD

Put it up!

PEER GYNT

A dream of a silver-claspt book!

That I'll let go for the price of a hook.

THE LAD

To the devil with dreams!

PEER GYNT

My kaiserdome, man!

I fling it among you, let take it who can!

THE LAD

Is the crown given in?

PEER GYNT

Of the loveliest straw.

The first who shall wear it, 't will fit without flaw.

Hi, there is more! An addled egg, there!

The Prophet's beard! A madman's grey hair!

All are his who can find for one who astray is

A sign post in the hills saying: Here your way is!

THE BAILIFF (*who has come up*)

If you carry on in this manner much more

Your way will soon lead to the prison-door.

PEER GYNT (*hat in hand*)

Quite likely. But who was Peer Gynt, can you tell, sir?

THE BAILIFF

What nonsense —

PEER GYNT

Your pardon! I beg you ——!

THE BAILIFF

Oh! well, sir,

He's said to have been a disgusting romancer ——

PEER GYNT

A romancer?

THE BAILIFF

Yes — all that was strong or great

He romanced about, he did it all, he'd state.

But pardon me, friend—I have duties to answer——

(Goes)

PEER GYNT

And now, this remarkable man, where is he?

AN ELDERLY MAN

To foreign lands he sail'd over the sea;

It fared ill with him too, as one might swear —

It's many years since he was hanged out there.

PEER GYNT

Hang'd? Ay, ay! I'd have thought as much;

Peer Gynt was himself to the final touch. *(Bows)*

Farewell — and thank you all for the day,

(Goes a few steps, but stops again)

You joyous lads and you damsels pretty,

With a traveller's tale my shot shall I pay?

SEVERAL

Yes, do you know any?

PEER GYNT

Aye, and witty. —

(He comes nearer; a look of strangeness steals over him)

Out in 'Frisco once I was digging for gold.

It was cramm'd with buffoons, a number untold.

With his toes one could fiddle away; on his haunches
Another could dance the old Spanish dances;
A third composed verses, and still could do it
While his brain-pan was having a hole bored thro' it.
To this buffoon-meeting the devil came hieing —
Thought he, with the rest, his luck would be trying.
His great line was this: in a perfectly fine
Realistic way he could grunt like a swine.
In a full house, th' excitement was tense; tho' none
knew

Who he was, yet his personality drew.
He came on in a cloak with a flying cape; yes, it —
Or *Man muss sich drappiren*, as Germans express it.
But under that cape — what no one suspected —
He'd smuggled a real, live pig undetected.
And now began the representation.
He pincht; and the pig squeakt up to th' occasion.
The whole thing was a fantasy, or tried to be,
On the life of a pig, both enslaved and free;
At the end, a shrill slaughter-house-shriek let vent;
Whereupon the performer bowed humbly, and
went. —

The critics discussed and judged the whole picture;
Its scheme met with praise and also with stricture;
Some thought the tone was too attenuated;
Some that the death-shriek show'd too much labor —
But that *qua* grunt he had exaggerated
The whole thing, each man agreed with his neigh-
bor. —

The devil lackt sense: had he thought for a second
He would have first with his audience reckon'd.

[*He bows and goes. A puzzled silence falls over the people.*

SCENE FIVE

Whitsun Eve. In the heart of the forest. Far away, in a clearing, is a hut with reindeer horns on the gable.

Peer Gynt is creeping among the undergrowth, gathering wild onions.

PEER GYNT

Here is one standpoint. What is the next to swing to? —

One should prove all things, and then the best cling to.

Well, so I have — away from Cæsar

And downwards as far as from Nebuchadnezzar.

So I've had, after all, to go through Bible history. —

The old boy's return'd to his mother. — I've misst her, aye,

As it's writ, Born of earth, thou art earth's child still.

The main thing in life is one's belly to fill.

Fill it with onions! That's precious poor faring —

I'll be cunning and try my hand at snaring.

Water's here in the beck; so I shan't suffer thirst,

And, after all, over the beasts I am first.

When it's my time to die, as it one day will be —

I shall creep in under a wind-fallen tree;

Like the bear, I'll heap up the leaves for a cover,

And scrape on the bark in big letters, over

The place where I am: Here Peer Gynt lies, a

Good sort, o'er all the other beasts Kaiser. —

Kaiser? (*Laughs inwardly*)

Old cuckoo of soothsaying! You

Are n't Kaiser; you're an onion. See what I'll do!

I am going to peel you now, my good Peer!

You won't escape either by howl or pray'r.

(Takes an onion and strips off one coat after another)

There lies, in tatters, the outermost coat:

'T is the ship-wreckt man clinging on to the boat.

Here 's the passenger-layer, scanty and thin —

Yet to taste there 's a smack of Peer Gynt therein.

The gold-digger ego 's the next thereunder;

Its juice has gone — or — was there any, I wonder?

This one with hard skin and coarse in the grain

Is the old Hudson-Bay and seal-hunter strain.

The next 's like a crown — O! thanks, right away

We will throw that without further delay.

Here 's the archæologist, short, energetic.

And here fresh and juicy 's the ego prophetic.

It stinks, as the Scripture has it, of lies,

Enough to bring tears to an honest man's eyes.

This layer, that 's roll'd so softly together,

Is the gentleman living at ease in fair weather.

The next one seems sick. It has odd black figures —

Black can denote both parsons and niggers.

(Pulls off several at once)

What a vast number of swathings are here!

Where 's the kernel? Won't it ever appear?

(Pulls the whole onion to bits)

No! I 'm blest if it will! To the innermost centre

It 's all swathings — each less as the deeper I
enter. —

Nature is witty! *(Throws the bits away)*

Brooding thoughts to hell tumble!

If one thinks overmuch, one is apt to stumble.

Well, I can laugh at the danger, undaunted;

For I, on all fours here, am firmly planted.

(Scratches the back of his head)

How the whole odd affair the spirit amazes!

Life uses fairy-gold, as the phrase is.

If you snatch at the coin, hey! presto 's the call,

And you grasp dead leaves only — or nothing at all.

(He has come near to the hut; he catches sight of it and starts)

This hut? On the heath ——! Ha! *(Rubs his eyes)*

It seems as though

This very same building I used to know. —

The reindeer-skull, spreading there over the gable —!

A mermaid, shaped like a fish from the navel —!

Lies! There 's no mermaid! But nails, and a lock —

Bars, to keep out the hobgoblin-thoughts that
knock —!

SOLVEIG *(singing in the hut)*

For Whitsun all has been ready since noon.

Dearest lad of mine, far away, far —

Comest thou soon?

Is thy burden smarting?

Take time; for, oh,

I 'll wait; at parting

I promised thee so.

PEER GYNT *(rises, quiet and deadly pale)*

One who 's remember'd — and one, who 's forgot.

One who 's squander'd — and one who 's treasured
for ever.

O, zeal! — And the game can be play'd again —
never!

O, dread! — My Empire was here in this spot!

(Runs off along the wood path)

SCENE SIX

Night. A heath with firs. A forest-fire has been raging. Charred tree trunks stretching for miles. White mists here and there clinging to the earth. Peer Gynt is running over the heath.

PEER GYNT

Ashes, fog-scud, dust wind-driven —
Here 's enough for building given!
Stench and rottenness within
The whited sepulchre of sin.
Still-born knowledge, dreams, romances
Laid the pyramid's foundation;
So proceeds the work's creation,
Step on step of lying fancies.
Zeal avoided, shunn'd repentance.
Flaunt on top, a scutcheon naked;
Hark! The trump of doom their sentence!
Petrus Gyntus Cæsar fecit! (Listens)
What is that like children's weeping?
Weeping, but half-way to song. —
At my feet are thread-balls creeping —!
(*Kicks at them*)
Off! And cease my path to throng!

THE THREAD-BALLS (*on the ground*)

Thoughts are we;
Thou shouldst have thought us;
Feet to flee
Thou shouldst have brought us!

PEER GYNT (*going roundabout*)

I have given life to one; —
He was crook-legg'd, could n't run!

THE THREAD-BALLS

We should have risen
Like voices quivering —
We creep here, in prison,
Like thread-balls shivering.

PEER GYNT (*stumbling*)

Thread-ball! Oh! you rascal, damn you!
Trip me, father as I am? You —! (*Flees away*)

WITHERED LEAVES (*flying before the wind*)

We are a clarion;
Thou shouldst have been sounding us!
While thou didst tarry, on
Crept Death confounding us.
Here's the worm's bite on us,
Our curves dissecting;
No sun will light on us,
Sweet fruits protecting.

PEER GYNT

Not in vain your life's enduring;
Lie you still; you'll save manuring.

A SINGING IN THE AIR

We are a song;
Thou shouldst have sung us! —
Too long! Too long
Thou has warpt and wrung us.
In thy heart's hollow
We've been lying and waiting;
No word came, creating.
We're poison to swallow!

PEER GYNT

Poison you, you stupid lines!
Had I time for verse and whines?
(*Tries a short cut*)

DEWDROPS (*dripping from the branches*)

We are tears
Unshed, unanguisht.
Sharp-wounding ice-spears
We could have vanquisht.
Now the spears stick in
The breast we 'd be quick in;
The wound is mended
Our pow'r is ended.

PEER GYNT

Thanks: in the Rondë my tears started —
All the same my tail-part smarted!

BROKEN STRAWS

We are deeds;
Thou shouldst have endeavor'd us;
Doubt, with his weeds,
Has strangled and sever'd us.
On the Ultimate Day, ah!
We 'll come in a crew
And all we will say, ah —
Then woe to you!

PEER GYNT

Shabby tricks these, as I live!

Blame me for what 's negative? (*Hastens away*)

ÅSE'S VOICE (*far away*)

Fie, what a rush, boy!
You 're oversetting me!
Here in the slush, boy —
Sadly it 's wetting me. —
Take that turn instead, you —!
Peer, where 's the castle?
The Fiend has misled you
By the stick with the tassel!

PEER GYNT

Fast away you 'd best be tearing!
If the devil's sins you 're bearing,
On the hillside you 'll fall prone;
Hard enough, to bear one's own. (*Runs off*)

SCENE SEVEN

Another part of the heath.

PEER GYNT (*sings*)

A sexton! A sexton! Where are the dogs staying?
A song from brazen precentor mouths braying;
Around your hat-brim a mourning-band deep;
I have many dead; I must see them asleep!
[*The Button-Molder, with a box of tools and a large casting-ladle, comes from a side-path.*]

THE BUTTON-MOLDER

Well met, old gaffer!

PEER GYNT

Good evening, friend!

BUTTON-MOLDER

The man 's in a hurry. Where does he wend?

PEER GYNT

To a wake.

BUTTON-MOLDER

Indeed? My eyes are n't what they
were —

Excuse me — your name does n't chance to be Peer?

PEER GYNT

Peer Gynt, as they say.

BUTTON-MOLDER

That 's luck, all right;
It 's precisely Peer Gynt I am sent for to-night.

PEER GYNT

You're sent for? What would you?

BUTTON-MOLDER

You see what this is,

I'm a button-molder. You must go into this.

PEER GYNT

In the ladle? What for?

BUTTON-MOLDER

There you must be melted.

PEER GYNT

Melt ——?

BUTTON-MOLDER

It's empty, and clean as if 't were new smelted.

Your grave's dug, your coffin is now on the way.

In your body the worms' feast furious and faster

Can grow — but I've orders, without delay

To fetch in your soul, on behalf of Master.

PEER GYNT

It can't be! Like this without any warning ——!

BUTTON-MOLDER

It's an old custom, when a man's buried or born, in

Strict secret to settle the date of the function;

And the guest of honor has no injunction.

PEER GYNT

Yes, that's true. I'm dizzy. My thoughts seem to smolder.

You are then ——

BUTTON-MOLDER

I told you — a button-molder.

PEER GYNT

I see! The pet child has nicknames to go by.

So, Peer, it's there, that you must get the throw-by!

But, my good man, 't is monstrous unfair, yes it is!

I'm sure I deserve gentler treatment than this;
Although you may n't think it, I'm not a bad
chap —

I've done not a little good here; mayhap,
At the worst I'm a bungler, a sort of beginner —
But certainly not a singular sinner.

BUTTON-MOLDER

That's the rub, my good man; all the trouble is
thence;

You're no sinner at all in the higher sense;
So you, all the torture-pangs unpaid, 'll
Come, like the rest, to the casting-ladle.

PEER GYNT

Ladle or sulphur pit — what's in a name?
Spruce-ale or swipes, each is beer just the same.
Go! Satan!

BUTTON-MOLDER

You can't be so rude as to judge
For horse-hooves the two feet on which I trudge?

PEER GYNT

On horse-hooves or fox's claws — get out;
And take good care what you are about!

BUTTON-MOLDER

My friend, you are under a great delusion.
To save time — we're both in a hurry to go —
I'll give reasons enough to clear up the confusion.
You have, your own mouth has just told me so,
Never practised the so-called strenuous sinning —
Scarce middling, even ———

PEER GYNT

Ah, now you're beginning
To talk reasonably ———

BUTTON-MOLDER

Wait just a bit;

“Virtuous” were a word that would hardly fit ——

PEER GYNT

Well, that I have never laid claim to have been.

BUTTON-MOLDER

You’re but so-so then, betwixt and between.

A sinner of really striking style

We can only meet nowadays once in a while;

It needs more than merely to tramp in the mire;

A sin is compounded of keenness and fire.

PEER GYNT

Yes; you’re right enough there; what you say is quite true;

Like the Berserkers, one must lay on and go through.

BUTTON-MOLDER

On the other hand, friend, you took your sin lightly.

PEER GYNT

Only outwardly, friend, I was splasht with mud slightly.

BUTTON-MOLDER

Now we’ll soon agree. The sulphur pit clearly

Is not for you, who in mire dabbled merely ——

PEER GYNT

And, in consequence, friend, I can go on as I came.

BUTTON-MOLDER

No, in consequence, friend, you for melting I claim.

PEER GYNT

What are these tricks you’ve hit upon, pray,

At home, while in foreign parts I’ve been away?

BUTTON-MOLDER

The custom has lasted since Adam was weary, all

That it’s meant for’s to save good material.

You must know — you've workt at it — time and
again

A casting will turn out — well, trash, to be plain;
Sometimes the loop was n't found on a button.
What did you do, then?

PEER GYNT

I flung it away.

BUTTON-MOLDER

Ah! 't was known John Gynt was never a glutton
To save, while his purse had aught in it. Eh?
But Master's one of the thriftier men;
That's why he's prosperous. He'd never fling
Away as rubbish the least little thing
If, as raw material, 't would serve again.
You were meant for a button, a shining token,
On the coat of the world; but your loop was broken,
And so to the waste-box you must pass.
And, as they say, be merged in the mass.

PEER GYNT

You surely don't mean to mix up me
With Dick and Tom into something new?

BUTTON-MOLDER

That's just what I mean. That your fate will be.
We've done it already to folk not a few.
They do just the same with coin at the Mint,
If the coins, through long usage, have lost their
imprint.

PEER GYNT

But these are the ways of a miserly screw!
My dear good friend, let me go free; now do —
A loopless button, a worn-out mite,
The loss — to a man like your master — how slight!

BUTTON-MOLDER

O! the spirit is in you: what thence we will get, 'll
Give you your value as so much metal.

PEER GYNT

No! I say! No! I will fight — do you worst —
Fight with teeth and claws! Sooner aught else first!

BUTTON-MOLDER

What else? If you 'd only use sense, 't would be right
enough.

For heav'n, we agreed, you're not nearly light
enough ——

PEER GYNT

I am easy contented; I don't aim so high;
But I won't lose myself, not a jot of what 's "I."
Have me judged by the law, as the old-fashioned
way is!

Give me Him with the Hoof, for a time — if my
stay is

A hundred years, at the worst; still, there
Is something a man can surely bear;
The torture 's just moral; and that should prevent us
From thinking it can be so mighty momentous.
It is, as 't is written, a state of transition,
As the fox said — one waits, and then, as a vision,
The hour of redemption! One lives withdrawn,
And hopes for the happier day to dawn. —
But this other — to have to mix and float
In some outsider's carcass, a midge, a mote —
This ladle-business, this "Of Gynt no more!"
This from my innermost soul I abhor!

BUTTON-MOLDER

But surely you need n't, my excellent Peer,
Get so very warm over so small an affair?

Yourself you have never been, never — so why
Does it matter at all, if completely you die?

PEER GYNT

Have I not been? — I could laugh, very nearly!
Peer Gynt then has been something else, I suppose!
In the dark, button-molder, you 're judging, clearly.
Could you see where my innermost being grows,
You would find only Peer, yes, nothing but Peer,
Nothing else at all and nothing more 's there.

BUTTON-MOLDER

It 's impossible. I have my orders here.
“Peer Gynt thou shalt fetch” — see, it 's written
clear —
“He 's defied his life's design from his cradle.
Like other spoilt goods, put him into the ladle.”

PEER GYNT

What nonsense! Some other they 're thinking on.
Is it really Peer? Not Rasmus or John?

BUTTON-MOLDER

I melted them up many years ago.
Don't waste time now; but come quietly! So!

PEER GYNT

No! I 'm damn'd if I do! Would n't it be splendid
If we heard to-morrow some one else was intended!
My good man, you really had better take care!
The responsibility 's heavy to bear —

BUTTON-MOLDER

I have it in writing —

PEER GYNT

A respite I ask!

BUTTON-MOLDER

What good will that do you?

PEER GYNT

I'll make it my task
To find proofs I have been myself, all of my life;
And that is the issue on which we're at strife.

BUTTON-MOLDER

Find proofs? But how?

PEER GYNT

By vouchers and witnesses.

BUTTON-MOLDER

I fear Master won't take them as signs of what fitness is.

PEER GYNT

O! Enough for the day the day's evil things call!
Just loan me myself, my dear man, that's all;
I'll be back soon. One's birth there is no repeating
And one clings to one's self, as created, you know.
Come; are we agreed?

BUTTON-MOLDER

Well; be it so.

But remember, at the next cross-way is our meeting.
[*Peer Gynt runs off.*]

SCENE EIGHT

A further point on the heath.

PEER GYNT (*running hard*)

Time is money, as the Scripture says for our learning.
If I only knew where the cross-ways are —
They may be near, and they may be far.
The earth, like hot iron, beneath me is burning.
A witness! A witness! Oh, where shall I find one?
It's unthinkable here, on this heath. 'T was designed on

The stupidest system, this world! Where a right
Has got to be proved, though it's plain as the light!
[*An Old Crooked Man, with a stick in his hand and
bag on his back, trudges in front of him.*

THE OLD MAN (*stopping*)

Dear, kind sir — spare a penny to a homeless soul!

PEER GYNT

I'm sorry, I have n't a copper, no, not one —

THE OLD MAN

Prince Peer! That we meet again, as the years
roll —

PEER GYNT

Who are you?

THE OLD MAN

Is the Old Man of the Rondë forgotten?

PEER GYNT

You are never —?

THE OLD MAN

The Dovrë-King, yes; just that!

PEER GYNT

The Dovrë-King? Really? The Dovrë-King! What!

THE OLD MAN

Oh, I'm down on my luck! — Still hard fate
pushes —

PEER GYNT

Ruin'd?

THE OLD MAN

Plunder'd — stript bare of all.

And here, like a starving wolf, I must crawl.

PEER GYNT

Hurra! Such witness don't grow on the bushes!

THE OLD MAN

The Prince, too, has got gray since we met.

PEER GYNT

Time's scars!

My dear father-in-law, he gnaws and wears.

Well; that's enough of our private affairs —

And, above all, let's have no family jars.

I was then but a madcap ——

THE OLD MAN

Of course; and it's true

The Prince was then young. And then what won't
one do?

But the Prince was wise in rejecting his bride;

She would always trouble and shame have been giving!

For since then she went to the bad at a stride ——

PEER GYNT

Dear me!

THE OLD MAN

And has been most abandon'd; beside

Just think — at the present with Trond she is living.

PEER GYNT

What Trond?

THE OLD MAN

Of the Valfjeld.

PEER GYNT

Aha? 'T was he

That the farm-lasses left to come courting me.

THE OLD MAN

But my grandson has grown up tall and stout,

And has flourishing children all over the land ——

PEER GYNT

Please, my dear man, this chatter we'll do without;

I've got a quite different problem in hand. —

I've got into rather an awkward position —

I have need of a voucher or witness to swear;

And you, father-in-law, could best help me there.
And I'd give you a tip, say, in recognition ——

THE OLD MAN

Really? Can I come to the Prince's aid?
And with a character I'll be repaid?

PEER GYNT

Most gladly. I have n't much cash in pocket,
And so am compell'd severely to dock it.
Now hear what 's the trouble. No doubt you recall
The night when, a suitor, I enter'd your hall ——

THE OLD MAN

Of course, my Lord Prince!

PEER GYNT

But pray do not "prince" me!
But no matter. By force you wisht to convince me;
By a slit in the lens you'd have biasst my sight,
Would have made of Peer Gynt a troll of the night:
What did I do? Protested with might and main,
Swore I'd stand on my own till the end of the story;
And so I renounced Love, Power and Glory,
And all this that I might myself retain.
To this fact, you see, you must swear 'fore the
judge ——

THE OLD MAN

No, I'm blest if I can!

PEER GYNT

Why, what is this fudge?

THE OLD MAN

Why, surely to lie you would never compel me?
Did n't you put on the troll-breeches, tell me?
And tasted the mead ——?

PEER GYNT

You lured me persuasively;

But the ultimate test I declined unevasively,
And it's that your idea of a man depends on.
A poem is judg'd by the note which it ends on.

THE OLD MAN

But it ended, Peer, just in the contrary way.

PEER GYNT

What's this rot?

THE OLD MAN

When you left the Rondë, that day
My motto upon your escutcheon was smitten.

PEER GYNT

What motto?

THE OLD MAN

The sundering word had been written.

PEER GYNT

The word?

THE OLD MAN

That parts man and the ways thereof
From troll-folk: Troll, to thyself be enough!

PEER GYNT (*recoils a step*)

Enough!

THE OLD MAN

And you've lived with all your might
Right up to the word ever since that night.

PEER GYNT

I have! Peer Gynt!

THE OLD MAN (*weeping*)

It's monstrous ingratitude!
You've lived as a troll, but disguised your true
attitude.
Through the word that I taught you, you've with
dexterity
Swung yourself into a state of prosperity;

And now you must turn up your nose despising
Me and the word, to which you owe your rising.

PEER GYNT

Enough! A hill-troll! An egoist! Oh!

This must be all rubbish; it is, I know!

THE OLD MAN (*pulls out a bundle of old newspapers*)

You think, p'raps, the Press not much after our
ways is?

Just wait; here I'll show you in red and black
How the *Bloksberg Post* has sung your praises;
Here's the *Haklefeld Journal* on the same tack
From the year you left home to the day you came
back. —

Won't you read them, Peer? Do, if you feel inclined.
Here's a leader now; "Stallion-hoof," it's signed.
And here "Troll Nationalism" 's another.

It urges a truth that cannot be denied,
That's it no use for horns and tail making a bother,
So long as one has but a bit of the hide.

"Our enough," it concludes, "is always ample
To give men trolldom's mark," and gives you as
example.

PEER GYNT

A hill-troll? I!

THE OLD MAN

The matter's clear — quite.

PEER GYNT

And I might have remain'd where I was that night?
Might have stay'd in the Rondë snug, and in slumber?
Spared my trouble and toil and of shoes — what a
number!

Peer Gynt — a troll! — It's rubbish! Fudge! I!!
Here's a ha'penny to buy you tobacco. Good-bye!

THE OLD MAN

No, Prince Peer!

PEER GYNT

Let go! You're lunatic
Or in second childhood. To hospital! Quick!

THE OLD MAN

O! that's just what I want and have hitherto misst.
My great-grandchildren, who are everywhere staying
Have become most important, as I was saying;
And they say that it's only in books I exist.
The saw has it, Unkindest of all are relations;
The truth of that saying I sorely bewail,
It's cruel to count as a fable, a tale ——

PEER GYNT

My dear man, there are others bear these imputations.

THE OLD MAN

And ourselves we've no Mutual Aid Society,
No poor-box, no bank to put pennies by —
To the Rondë these things would be in contrariety.

PEER GYNT

Yes, that damn'd "To thyself be enough" was the
cry!

THE OLD MAN

With the Prince the word is no source of complaining.
And if he could but contrive — all my days it ——

PEER GYNT

My man, it's a wrong scent on which you are strain-
ing;

I'm right on my uppers myself, as they phrase it ——

THE OLD MAN

You don't mean it? The Prince — a beggar? All
gone?

PEER GYNT

Completely. The Prince's ego's in pawn.
And you've done it all, you damn'd trolls! You!
One sees, what bad company brings a man to.

THE OLD MAN

So my hope's tumbled down again right off its tree!
At a

Shuffle I'd best go to town now. Good-bye!

PEER GYNT

What will you do there?

THE OLD MAN

I'll go to the theatre,
For national plays there's a newspaper cry —

PEER GYNT

Good luck to your journey; and greet them from me.
I'll come the same way, if I can but get free,
With a farce, mad and deep; they shall hear it one
Sunday,

And it's title is "*Sic transit gloria mundi!*"

[*He runs along the road; the Old Man of the Dovrë
shouts after him.*]

SCENE NINE

At a cross-way.

PEER GYNT

There's a tussle now, Peer, as you've never yet
known!

That Dovrish Enough has judged you its own.
It's a wreck; so to float with the jetsom endeavor.
Or else — but he flung in the rubbish-heap — never!

BUTTON-MOLDER (*at the parting of the ways*)

Well, Peer, have you vouchers now to your credit?

PEER GYNT

Oh! Is this the cross-way? Well, that is quick work!

BUTTON-MOLDER

In your face, as a sign-post, the letters that lurk
On the paper I see, before I have read it.

PEER GYNT

I got tired of the run — one might lose one's
way ——

BUTTON-MOLDER

Yes; and besides, what 's it lead to? Eh?

PEER GYNT

True enough; in the wood and at night to steer ——

BUTTON-MOLDER

There an old man trudges, though. Let 's call him
here?

PEER GYNT

No; let him go. He 's quite drunk, you see!

BUTTON-MOLDER

Still he might perhaps ——

PEER GYNT

Hush; no — let him be!

BUTTON-MOLDER

Well, shall we start?

PEER GYNT

One question merely.

“To be one self,” what 's it at bottom mean?

BUTTON-MOLDER

A singular question! An odd one to glean
From the mouth of a man ——

PEER GYNT

Answer shortly and clearly.

BUTTON-MOLDER

To be oneself is: oneself to slay.

But that answer is no doubt thrown away on you?
And so we'll say: everywhere to display,
Like a sign-board, Master's meaning upon you.

PEER GYNT

But suppose that a man's never come to know
What Master meant with him?

BUTTON-MOLDER

Then he must guess it.

PEER GYNT

But how often one's guesses go wrong, and so
In the midst of a life troubled waters oppress it.

BUTTON-MOLDER

That's true, Peer Gynt: the lack of good guesses
Is the best bait with which the Hoofed One his hook
dresses.

PEER GYNT

This is really a terribly tangled affair. —
Now that I've been myself, I no longer declare —
It might n't be easy to get the fact proved.
So I'll count that as lost. But just now, as I
wandered
Over the heath here alone, and pondered,
My shoe pinch't me, my conscience I felt it, was moved;
I said to myself: After all, you're a sinner —

BUTTON-MOLDER

You appear to want over again to begin a —

PEER GYNT

No; a great one, I mean, of vigor and fire;
Not only in deed, but in word and desire,
Abroad I have lived like a desperate beast. —

BUTTON-MOLDER

It may be; you've a list to prove what you say?

PEER GYNT

Well, give me a respite; I'll seek out a priest,
And confess, and then bring you his voucher straight-
way.

BUTTON-MOLDER

Oh, if you can bring me that, don't fear,
You'll escape the casting-ladle, that's clear.
But orders, Peer ——

PEER GYNT

O! they're years old, those papers!
They belong, no doubt, to a long-past date;
I did once live slackly, indulged in the vapours,
Played at the prophet, and trusted in fate.
Well, may I try?

BUTTON-MOLDER

But ——!

PEER GYNT

My dear good fellow —
There's not much doing here your resources to rally.
The air is so bracing, the people get mellow —
Why, it adds an ell to all of their ages.
Remember, the Justedal parson's pages:
"It's seldom that any one dies in this valley."

BUTTON-MOLDER

To the next cross-way; but no more, not an inch, sir!

PEER GYNT

A priest I must catch, though it be with a pincer.
(*Runs off*)

SCENE TEN

A hillside with heather. The path winds up along the ridge.

PEER GYNT

This may come in useful for many a thing,
Said Esben, as he pickt up a magpie's wing.
Who 'd have said an account of one's sins, so late
On the last night, could help a man out of his strait?
It's a ticklish business indeed, and rash is
A move right into the fire from the ashes —
There's a saw though, age-long, and of world-wide
scope,

That says: as long as there's life, there is hope.

[A lean person in a priest's cassock, tucked in at the girdle, and with a fowling-net over his shoulder, comes running along the hillside.]

PEER GYNT

Who's that? A priest with a fowling-net!
Hurrah! I'm the spoilt child of fortune! Well met!
Herr Pastor! The road's bad, with many a
hole —

THE LEAN ONE

It is; but what would n't one do for a soul?

PEER GYNT

Oho! Then there's some one bound heavenwards?

THE LEAN ONE

Nay!

I hope he is taking a different way.

PEER GYNT

May I go with you, Pastor, where'er 't is you walk to?

THE LEAN ONE

With pleasure; I'm glad to have some one to talk to!

PEER GYNT

There's a thing on my mind —

THE LEAN ONE

Indeed! Go ahead!

PEER GYNT

You see here before you a man who has led
A good sort of life. All state-laws I have kept;
Behind bolts and bars I have never slept;
Yet, it happens at times that a fellow stumbles,
Loses his feet ——

THE LEAN ONE

Oh! the best have their tumbles.

PEER GYNT

Well, these trifles, you see ——

THE LEAN ONE

Only trifles?

PEER GYNT

Yes.

I have always refrained from sin in excess.

THE LEAN ONE

Then, leave me in peace, my dear man, please;
I am not what you think. You're looking at these,
These fingers of mine? What do you see, there? Eh?

PEER GYNT

Nails in a remarkable state of advance.

THE LEAN ONE

And now? At my feet you are taking a glance?

PEER GYNT (*pointing*)

That's a natural hoof?

THE LEAN ONE

I trust so, anyway.

PEER GYNT (*raising his hat*)

I'd have sworn you were simply a priest, as you
drest;

And I find I've the honor — well, best is best;
When the hall-door invites — don't go to the back;
When the king can be met — bid the lackey go pack.

THE LEAN ONE

Your hand! From prejudice you enjoy freedom.
I offer my services, friend, if you need 'em?
But don't ask for power, or money to buy it.
Were I to hang for 't, I could n't supply it.
You would n't believe of the business — how slack
it is;
Trade 's dwindling. The prospect — I can't say how
black it is.
There 's no traffic in souls; one may sometimes wend,
A stray one ——

PEER GYNT

The race has so specially raised itself?

THE LEAN ONE

No, indeed; it is shameful the way it's debased
itself —
In a casting-ladle most of them end.

PEER GYNT

Aha, yes — I have heard it alluded to.
In fact 't was the cause of my coming to you.

THE LEAN ONE

Speak out!

PEER GYNT

If it is n't an indiscretion,
I should like ——

THE LEAN ONE

A harbor of refuge? Eh!

PEER GYNT

You've precisely guesst what I was going to say.
The business is slack, on your own confession,
So you would n't press home such rules as exist
on ——

THE LEAN ONE

But ——

PEER GYNT

I don't ask for much; I would n't insist on
Receiving a salary, say; but I'd hope for
A treatment as friendly as things gave scope for.

THE LEAN ONE

Rooms heated?

PEER GYNT

Not too hot; above all these,
Leave to go out again free, and in ease —
The right, as the phrase is, to leave with impunity
If one day there came a glad opportunity.

THE LEAN ONE

My dear friend, I vow I'm sincerely sorry;
You can't think how I have from all the nations
People with similar supplications,
When they're leaving this scene of earthly worry.

PEER GYNT

But when I call my career to mind,
I feel I must come, that I have a clear right ——

THE LEAN ONE

Only trifles, you said ——

PEER GYNT

In a sense, oh quite;
But, well, I have traffickt in slaves, I find ——

THE LEAN ONE

Men have traffickt in wills and souls on conditions
So bungling and stupid, they lost their admissions.

PEER GYNT

To China I've shipp'd many Bramah figures.

THE LEAN ONE

We laugh at such things. They're but trash like
your niggers.

There are people who ship off far ghastlier things
In sermons, books, pictures — and *them* the cold
stings

Outside my door ——

PEER GYNT

Yes, but hear the worst of it!

Once I went off and set up as a prophet.

THE LEAN ONE

In foreign parts? Humbug! The casting-ladle
Takes most people's *Sehen ins Blaue* in the end.
If that 's all you rely on, that, I 'm afraid, 'll
Never house you with me, though I wish it could,
friend.

PEER GYNT

Well, hear this; in a ship-wreck — I clung to a
boat —

And: Drowning men grasp at straws, some one's
suggested —

And: To one self one is nearest, some one else
wrote —

So a cook of his life I half-way divested.

THE LEAN ONE

If a kitchen-maid you had half-way divested
Of something else, I 'd be as much interested.
What sort of stuff is this half-way prate,
Asking your pardon? In times like the present
On rubbish like this is, nerveless, putrescent,
Who 'd throw away coal at its present high rate?
There, don't get enraged; at your sins I was girding;
Forgive me for being so blunt in my wording. —
Now, my dear fellow, put all this out of your head,
And get used to the thought of the fate that's
awarded you.

What would you gain if I lodged you and boarded
you?

Just think; you're a sensible man, when all's said.
Well, it's true you'd have memory, when you were
dead —

But in gazing on memory's land outspread
Your heart and your intellect both were ill sped;
You'd have, as the Swedes say, but poor sport
afforded you.

You have nothing to smile or lift up your voice over;
No cause for despair, and naught to rejoice over;
Nothing to make you hot or cold
Only a something to worry you old.

PEER GYNT

It is written: it's never very much bother
To know where the shoe pinches that's worn by
another.

THE LEAN ONE

That's true; I have — thank You-know-who —
Only got need of a single odd shoe.
It's lucky that shoes come up in our talk;
It reminds me of what I have got to be at,
Going after a roast, that I hope will prove fat;
So I can't gossip more, but must on with my
walk —

PEER GYNT

And what sort of sin-diet, may I inquire,
Has fatten'd the man?

THE LEAN ONE

I hear people say
That he's been himself, by night and by day;
And that is the principal thing we desire.

PEER GYNT

Himself? To such folk then your parish extends?

THE LEAN ONE

Well, the door's set ajar. You see, it depends —
To be oneself — one in two ways can attack it;
There's a right and a wrong side to every jacket.
Quite lately in Paris, 't is said, they've begun
A way to take portraits by help of the sun;
You can either have people portray'd as they live,
Or else have a so-called negative.
In these you've the lights and the shadows inverted,
And they're ugly in commonplace eyes, 't is asserted;
But for all that, in them the likeness is latent,
And it needs but your efforts to make it patent.
If a soul in photography should have selected
The negative method its life to portray,
The plate's not, for that reason, entirely rejected,
But simply to me it's given away.
Then I take it and treat it to change what is mutable,
And develop the picture by methods suitable.
I steam and I dip, I burn and I scour
With sulphur and other such things, every hour,
Till the picture comes, which the photo should give;
That, namely, which people call positive.
But for one who has wiped himself out, like you,
Sulphur and potash can nothing do.

PEER GYNT

And so one must come to you black as a raven
To be made a white grouse? What name is engraven,
Pray, on that negative counterfeit
From which you're a positive going to get?

THE LEAN ONE

The name's Peer Gynt.

PEER GYNT

Peer Gynt? Ah! His!

Is Herr Gynt himself?

THE LEAN ONE

Yes, he swears that he is.

PEER GYNT

He's trustworthy, too, is that same Herr Peter.

THE LEAN ONE

You know him, perhaps?

PEER GYNT

Oh, just to greet — er,

One knows all kinds of people.

THE LEAN ONE

I've no time to trape.

Where saw you him last?

PEER GYNT

It was down by the Cape.

THE LEAN ONE

Di Buona Speranza?

PEER GYNT

Yes, but he's sailing

Thence soon, unless my memory's failing.

THE LEAN ONE

Then without delay I must show my best pace.

I hope I shall catch him ere he's left the place!

The Cape I detest; what spoils everything there is

Those annoying Stavanger missionaries.

(He rushes away, southwards)

PEER GYNT

The stupid dog! There he goes racing, head down,
Tongue lolling out. Well, he'll be done brown.

When I fool such an ass, I need none to reward it.

He's a nice sort of fellow to swagger and lord it!

He has got a fine lot, truly, to brag about!

By this trade he'll never get much flesh to drag about;

He'll soon drop off his perch, and with him the whole sordid

Business. — Ahem! My own seat's scarcely steady: I'm expelled from the self-owning gentry already.

(A shooting star is seen; he nods after it)

Greeting from Peer Gynt, Brother Starry-flash!

To shine bright, at a gulp into nothing to crash —
(Pulls himself together as though in terror, and goes deeper into the mists; stillness for a moment and then he cries)

Is there no one, no one in all this driven —

No one in the abysses, no one in heaven —!

(Comes forward again further down, throws his hat on the path, and tears his hair. By degrees a stillness comes over him)

Then a soul can, so horribly poor, slip away

Back to nothingness, into the mist and the gray.

O beautiful earth, be not angry, I pray,

That for nothing I've trampled thy grass sweet-smelling.

O beautiful sun, thou hast squander'd away

Thy glory of light on a desolate dwelling,

To warm and attune it, was none to begin there —

The owner, they tell me, was never within there.

Beautiful sun and beautiful earth,

You were foolish to cherish my mother at birth.

The spirit is niggard and nature is lavish,

And one's life for one's birth is a high price to ravish.

I will up to the hills, to the loftiest one;

I will look once more on the rising sun,
Gaze over the promised land, gaze away
Till I'm tired; then try and get snow-drifts to
cover me;
And "Here NO ONE lies buried" have written over
me;
And afterwards — then — ! Let things go as they
may.

CHURCH-GOERS (*singing on the forest path*)
Morn blest beyond telling,
When Heaven's tongues came winging
To the earth like the flash of a sword!
Now from earth to His dwelling
Soars up His sons' singing
In the tongues of the Heaven of the Lord.

PEER GYNT (*crouches as in horror*)
Never look there! There waste and ruin abide. —
I'm afraid I was dead long before I died.
(*Tries to creep in among the bushes, but comes upon
the cross-way*)

BUTTON-MOLDER
Good morning, Peer Gynt! Where's the list of your
sinning?

PEER GYNT
Do you think that I have n't been shouting and
dinning
As hard as I could?

BUTTON-MOLDER

And met no one at all?

PEER GYNT

No; no one beside a photography rover.

BUTTON-MOLDER

Well, the respite is over.

PEER GYNT

Everything's over.

The owl smells a rat. Can't you hear? — there! —
its call?

BUTTON-MOLDER

That's the matins-bell —

PEER GYNT (*pointing*)

What's that shining there?

BUTTON-MOLDER

Only light from a hut.

PEER GYNT

And that song on the border

Of tears?

BUTTON-MOLDER

But a woman's song.

PEER GYNT

Ah! — that is where

Is the list of my sins —

BUTTON-MOLDER (*seizes him*)

Set your house in order!

[*They have come out of the underwood, and are standing near the hut. Daybreak.*]

PEER GYNT

Set my house in order? It's there! Off! Go!

Away! Were it big as a coffin, your ladle —

'T were too small, man, me and my sins to cradle!

BUTTON-MOLDER

To the third cross-way, Peer; but then — so — — !

(*Turns aside and goes*)PEER GYNT (*approaches the hut*)

Backwards or forwards, it's just as long;

In and out, and it's strait as strong. (*Stops*)

No! — like a lament, wild, unending

Is this to come back, in and home to be wending.
(*Takes some steps but stops again*)
Roundabout, said the Boyg!
(*Hears singing in the hut*)

No; this time say
Right through, however strait be the way!
[*He runs towards the cottage; at the same moment
Solweig appears in the door, dressed for church, and
with her hymn-book in a kerchief; a staff in her hand.
She stands erect and mild.*

PEER GYNT (*throws himself down on the threshold*)

Have you doom for the sinner, then speak the word.

SOLVEIG

It is he! It is he! O! praised be the Lord!
(*Gropes after him*)

PEER GYNT

All my sins and my trespasses! Cry and call!

SOLVEIG

Oh! my own lad, in nought hast thou sinn'd at all!
(*Gropes for him again and finds him*)

BUTTON-MOLDER (*behind the cottage*)

The sin-list, Peer Gynt?

PEER GYNT

Cry out all thy wrong!

SOLVEIG (*sits down beside him*)

Thou has made all my life as a beautiful song.
Blessed be thou, whom at last I am greeting!
Blessed, thrice blessed our Whitsun-morn meeting!

PEER GYNT

Then I am lost.

SOLVEIG

One yet reigns in the skies.

PEER GYNT

Lost! If you have not for riddles replies!

SOLVEIG

Ask me them.

PEER GYNT

Ask them! — Ah! once we get started!

Can you tell where Peer Gynt has been since we parted?

SOLVEIG

Been?

PEER GYNT

As when first from God's thought he went winging;
Been with his destiny's mark on his brow!
Canst thou tell me that! If not, I must bow
And go down where the mists are clinging.

SOLVEIG (*smiling*)

O, that riddle is easy.

PEER GYNT

If thou knowest, speak now!

Where was I, as myself, as the true man, the whole?
Where was I with the seal of God set on my soul?

SOLVEIG

In my faith, in my hope, in my love wast thou.

PEER GYNT (*starts back*)

What sayest thou! — Peace! With words thou art
playing.

Thou art mother thyself to the lad that's there!

SOLVEIG

Yes, I am; but, who is his Father, Peer?

Surely he who forgives at the mother's praying.

PEER GYNT (*a gleam of light comes over him, he cries*)

My mother; my wife; woman pure from all sin! —
O, hide me, hide me therein!

[*Clings to her and covers his face in her lap. A long stillness. Sunrise.*

SOLVEIG (*sings softly*)

Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine!

I will cradle thee, I will guard thee. —

The boy has been sitting on his mother's knees.

And through life's long day, they've been playing
at their ease.

The boy on his mother's breast has lain,

Through life's long day. God shield thee from all
pain!

Close up to my heart has the boy been prest

Through life's long day. Now he's tired, and would
rest.

Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine!

I will cradle thee! I will guard thee!

BUTTON-MOLDER'S VOICE (*behind the cottage*)

We will meet again, Peer, at the last cross-way;

And then we'll see whether — no more I say.

SOLVEIG (*sings louder in the fuller daylight*)

I will cradle thee, I will guard thee —

Sleep and dream, thou boy of mine!

CURTAIN

NOTES

NOTES

THE FIRST ACT

PAGES 6-9. The story of the flight on the reindeer is borrowed from a Norse folk-tale. It should be noticed that the symbolic, or typical, side of Peer is rendered more natural by this adoption of familiar stories — by investing his hero with some of the characteristics of a folk-hero. Ibsen ensures the Norwegian reader getting into the right frame of mind. It has not, of course, quite the same value for foreigners; but there seems no reason why Peer Gynt should not become as acclimatised to England as have Faust and Don Juan.

PAGE 15. I have used "Kaiser" as well as "Emperor" for rendering the word "Kejser": preference is given to "Emperor" in the cosmopolitan period of Peer Gynt's career.

PAGE 25. In a letter to me Mr. Archer points out that "Engelland" bears the same relation to "England" as does "Norroway" of the ballad to our "Norway." I thought of altering it to "Lyonesse," but on consideration have kept "Engelland." The reader must understand that it is a dim country of romance that Peer is dreaming of. (It should also be remembered that "Engelland" is an older form preserving the original "Angle-land." — E. B.)

PAGE 28. "Kitchen-Master" — a master of ceremonies: his duty is to see that everything goes off well at the feast.

PAGE 28. "Here the walls are wide, and the roof of the highest!" refers to the country-dance (the "Halling"), in which it is the object of the dancer to kick the rafters.

PAGE 32. "With the Vicar I read" — *i. e.*, prepared for Confirmation.

PAGE 35. "The Devil in the Nut" is, of course, an old folk-tale.

PAGE 39. "He's one of the 'swear-not,'" etc. Ibsen had been at Skien during a revival, not dissimilar to that which ten years ago overran Wales. Part of *Brand* owes a good deal to the effect produced on Ibsen by Pastor Lammers, the missionary of the movement; and here he makes Peer Gynt include Solveig's parents among the "awakened."

THE SECOND ACT

PAGE 52. Three Farm Girls. I can see no good reason for not translating "Saeter." "Saeter" is an out-farm, to which the cattle are sent to graze during the summer, and apparently the autumn; for in the folk-tale of *Peer Gynt* (in Asbjørnsen) Peer starts on his adventures "late in the autumn." Ibsen has borrowed the idea of the courtship between the farm girls and the trolls from the folk-tale; but in it, while there are only three girls, there are four Hill-Trolls — Gust of Vaerë, Tron of the Valfjeld, Tjöstöl Abakken, and Rolf Eldförpungen. Tron is the only name Ibsen has kept. Only one of the girls in the folk-tale, mad Kari, has any desire to have a troll as a lover; the other two Peer Gynt finds terrified and at their prayers, and glad of his succor. It will be seen by this that Ibsen has quite altered the color of the old tale: the girls in his poem are more "forthly," as they say in Cornwall, and brag of their troll-lovers. In the affair with Ingrid, Peer sins against physical love; in this adventure, against love that rules fancy; and in the bitter business with the Green-Clad One, against imaginative Love.

PAGE 56. Scene Five. For the last two scenes we have been on the edge of fairyland: here we enter. There is,

however, no kind of need to call these and the following scenes "visions," or "supra-sensual experiences." They are as real as any of Peer's selfish experiences.

PAGE 60. It is, perhaps, worth noticing that the Dovrë-King here anticipates Nietzsche; the Superman is remarkably like a Hill-Troll. And Nietzsche's blustering nonsense finds its best corrective in the stern, Greek sense of Ibsen's plays.

PAGE 62. "It's home-brew'd." Here Ibsen is attacking that spirit of nationalism which, from his superior vantage-point in Italy, he considered "narrowing." I do not think that this and the similar outbursts in Act IV need be taken too seriously.

THE THIRD ACT

PAGE 97. Every one who cares for fairy-stories will recognize the Castle West of the Moon and East of the Sun. The use Ibsen makes of it here is perhaps, with the exception of the Boyg, the most consummate of his folk-tale recollections.

PAGE 98. "Granë" was the name of Sigurd Fafnirs-bane's horse.

THE FOURTH ACT

PAGE 103. "Mr. Cotton." So in the original. Also his first remark is "Very well," in English. At first I kept this; but on consideration decided that what point it had was lost on English readers. I have, however, kept the scraps of French which Ibsen ascribes to M. Ballon, because they have an appeal to us, as to Ibsen. Also, it is not, I think, insular prejudice which makes me think Ibsen was better acquainted with colloquial French than conversational English.

PAGES 103, 104. I need hardly say that "goût," "ton," "en garçon," "Ur-Natur," "Ei was" are all Ibsen's phrases.

PAGE 107. "One norm you use" — "norm" is the word in the original.

PAGE 112. "Vest for me" — apart from its convenience as a rhyme, I thought it allowable to let Peer Gynt, in his rôle as *nouveau riche*, use this commercial synonym for waistcoat.

PAGE 115. "à la Lippe-Detmold," "en bloc" — so in original; also "Sir Gynt." Perhaps it is as well to remind the twentieth-century reader that Lippe-Detmold was an independent principality when *Peer Gynt* was written. It is, of course, now one of the twenty-six States that form the German Empire.

PAGE 118. "Sir Peter Gynt." So in original.

PAGE 119. "Damn it." Ibsen gives Mr. Cotton that inevitable "God dam."

PAGE 120. "Enfin" — so in original.

"But to the whole world I protest" — those who wish to grasp this and other political allusions are referred to Mr. Archer's edition of *Peer Gynt*.

PAGE 121. "Peter" — so in the original.

PAGE 124. "And the world's a bubble,
And to follow the use and wont saves trouble."

We shall find all through this Act, and to a great extent through the next, these parallelisms in speech or experience to Peer's previous adventures. This scene, I need hardly say, corresponds with that in the Dovrë-King's hall, of which Peer Gynt has just given so glowing an account to his three friends.

PAGE 146. "Eh bien!" So in the original.

PAGE 157. "The old group of Interpreters three score and ten." Mr. Archer says this is meant to refer to the writers of the Septuagint. If so, surely the 160 new ones is merely a round number for the languages into which the Bible has been translated since the Greek version.

PAGE 161. Huhu is a hit at those Norwegians who were seeking to use an artificial dialect, created out of the various local dialects, as a literary language. The movement has increased largely since Ibsen wrote *Peer Gynt*. There is no exact parallel to it, as the Gaelic League endeavours to revive for modern purposes a language with a splendid past literature.

PAGE 165. "Rechts and links" — so in original.

THE FIFTH ACT

PAGE 169. Hallingskarv, Jökke, Folgefånn — these are all mountains.

PAGE 177. The Strange Passenger. It should be remembered that Ibsen stated he put in this character "from caprice" — but he uses his caprice with wonderful effect.

PAGE 185. "Across life's night," etc. From here till the end of this scene, in spite of its obscurity, it is evident that Ibsen was preoccupied with the same religious motives that inspired the writing of *Brand*. The Strange Passenger, with this sentence, really changes his character altogether. Up to now he has been a jester, with no apparent message: now he personates Peer's "Last Chance": he almost takes on the rôle of guardian angel. The most difficult of his ambiguous speeches is certainly that which I have rendered:

"They who've gone thro' incineration
On week-days must have relaxation."

Mr. Archer's literal version is:

“The host whose dust inurned has slumbered
Treads not on week-days the cothurnus.”

One must not strain so fantastic a passage as this, but I think we can safely assume that The Strange Passenger is protesting against the idea that religious sincerity must always be coupled with a repellent severity of aspect. Anyway, he says, “Where I live” — *i. e.*, some spirit-world — “We do take week-days off. We allow ourselves to smile then.”

I have dealt with this because I have found that its meaning, in English, Norwegian, and German, is regarded as hopelessly obscure.

(The passage mentioned by Mr. Roberts as particularly difficult means literally: “The host that have slept in the burial-urns do not put on the buskin for every-day occasions.” The inner meaning of it is that those who have passed through the ordeal of death can afford to smile at everything else. Implied in it is a suggestion that beyond the grave waits a peace that gives but little weight to human worries and fears. The figure of the Strange Passenger is a symbolization of death — or rather of one of its aspects, another one being represented by the Button-Molder. The latter suggests death as the renewer of life, as the fount into which life lets its overflow fall back in order that thence it may issue again in more satisfactory forms. The Strange Passenger, on the other hand, presents death as the bringer of peace and rest, who demands a surrender of the fleshly shell as the price of his services. One might say that the refrain to every word uttered by the Passenger to Peer is this: “The lesson taught by mastered fear is that death and external dissolution come as a boon and not as a curse.” Back of the Button-Molder's insistence I perceive instead a thought which seems to have been present in the mind of Goethe during one of his talks with Eckermann: the thought that immortality is not inherent in man, but must be earned. For this reason I believe that the fifth act of *Peer Gynt*

may prove one of the foundation stones of a future conception of death that will be less panic-stricken and more scientific than the prevailing one. — E. B.)

PAGE 192. Scene Four shares with Three the reputation of being the most obscure in the play. It may help readers to follow the under-meanings if I give the names of the characters. "A Man Dressed in Mourning," is Aslak the Smith, "A Man in Grey" is Mads Moën, and the funeral is evidently Ingrid's, who seems to have married Aslak. The whole scene represents the sordid recollections of an old man about his disreputable past, and, as Peer says, "the deeper he goes, the worse is the smell." First we have Aslak and Mads' unsavory gibes about Ingrid; then, when Peer's name is introduced, Aslak shamelessly claims him as a relative — for did he not marry Peer's discarded mistress? Then Mads intervenes, also claiming relationship, for he had been betrothed to Ingrid, and so was connected with Peer Gynt.

Then finally there is the mysterious Lad who speaks of the dead woman as "Mother," but calls Aslak by his name. It is his remark that causes Peer the greatest disgust, and I think we must assume that the Lad is the son of Peer and Ingrid.¹ The appropriateness of Peer's tale, at the end of the scene, is obvious enough. Just as the Devil's audience was disgusted at the poor quality of the real pig, so the characters in this scene go on chattering about the old fanciful Peer Gynt, when the genuine man is there and they quite fail to recognize him.

PAGE 201. "Life uses fairy-gold, as the phrase is," etc.

Even Mr. Archer does not translate his original literally in this passage. The Norwegian, rendered verbatim, is "Life has, as it's phrased, a fox behind its ear. But when you grasp at him, Reynard takes to his heels." This odd expression, "to have a fox behind the ear," indicative of

¹ It is barely possible that he is the son of Ingrid and Mads. The betrothal ceremony in Norway was frequently the beginning of marital relations. Cf. the sermon in this Act.

deceit and double-dealing, would convey nothing to English readers. I think the well-known tradition of "fairy-gold" is a good enough equivalent, and more suited to the mood of the passage than Mr. Archer's "Life, as they say, plays with cards up its sleeve."

PAGE 205. The scene between Peer and the Button-Molder, apart from its intrinsic power, is interesting to English readers as expressing the same idea as does Mr. Kipling's *Tomlinson*. The resemblance is even closer in Scene Ten, when Peer is pleading with the Devil himself.

PAGE 233. "The owl smells a rat." (Here Mr. Roberts has given the only feasible translation of a phrase which, in a note excluded by me, he professes not to understand. The Norwegian phrase is: *Uglen lugter lunten*. The literal meaning of it is: "The owl smells the match." It is an old saw, dating back to the time of primitive fire-arms, when the hunter had to use a match-cord to set off his gun. The smell of the burning cord served as a warning to the bird, either of impending danger or, as seems more probable, of an impending feast. On meeting the Button-Molder a second time, Peer thinks the game is up, and the sound, at that moment, of a church bell, which he regards chiefly as a symbol of death and burial, makes him think of an owl hooting at the scent of possible prey. — E. B.)

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